

Tickling the funny bone
with co-pro comedies **p39**

User-generated product
promos make tracks **p59**

MIP Jr—Checking out preschool's new
direction and a stop-motion revival **p78**



Kidscreen

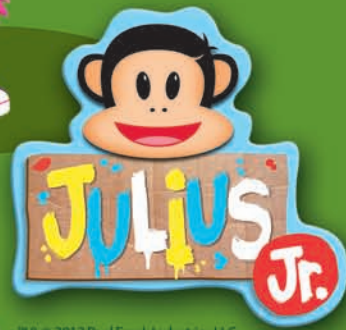
engaging the global children's entertainment industry

A publication of Brunico Communications Ltd. SEPTEMBER 2012



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(52x11')

JR.
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Gawayn 2

52x13'



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MIPCOM Stand
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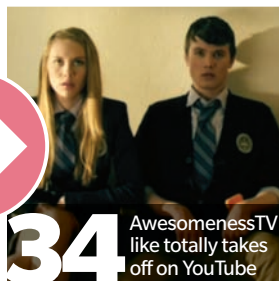


Disney Channel's new comedy *Gravity Falls* skyrockets to the top of the Saturday-morning ratings heap

Special Report

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We explore the new climate for preschool series production, spawned by the arrival of Disney Junior, and take a look at a stop-motion renaissance



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Cover Our editorial cover features Blue, the lead character from new CGI series *Miss Lavender's School for Little Monsters* from PPC Creative in London. International and event copies sport an ad for Saban Brands' new preschool series, *Julius Jr.*

Oops! "Lay of the Land—Netherlands" (July/August 2012, p. 15) should have stated that Nickelodeon Netherlands airs its original commission, hit telenovela *Het Huis Anubis*, not its English-language format, *House of Anubis*. In the same issue, we'd like to clarify that Welsh studio Dinamo's *Garden Galaxies* ("Cartoon Forum Finds," p. 30) has lined up Cake Entertainment and S4C as its partner and sponsor, respectively, heading into Cartoon Forum this month.

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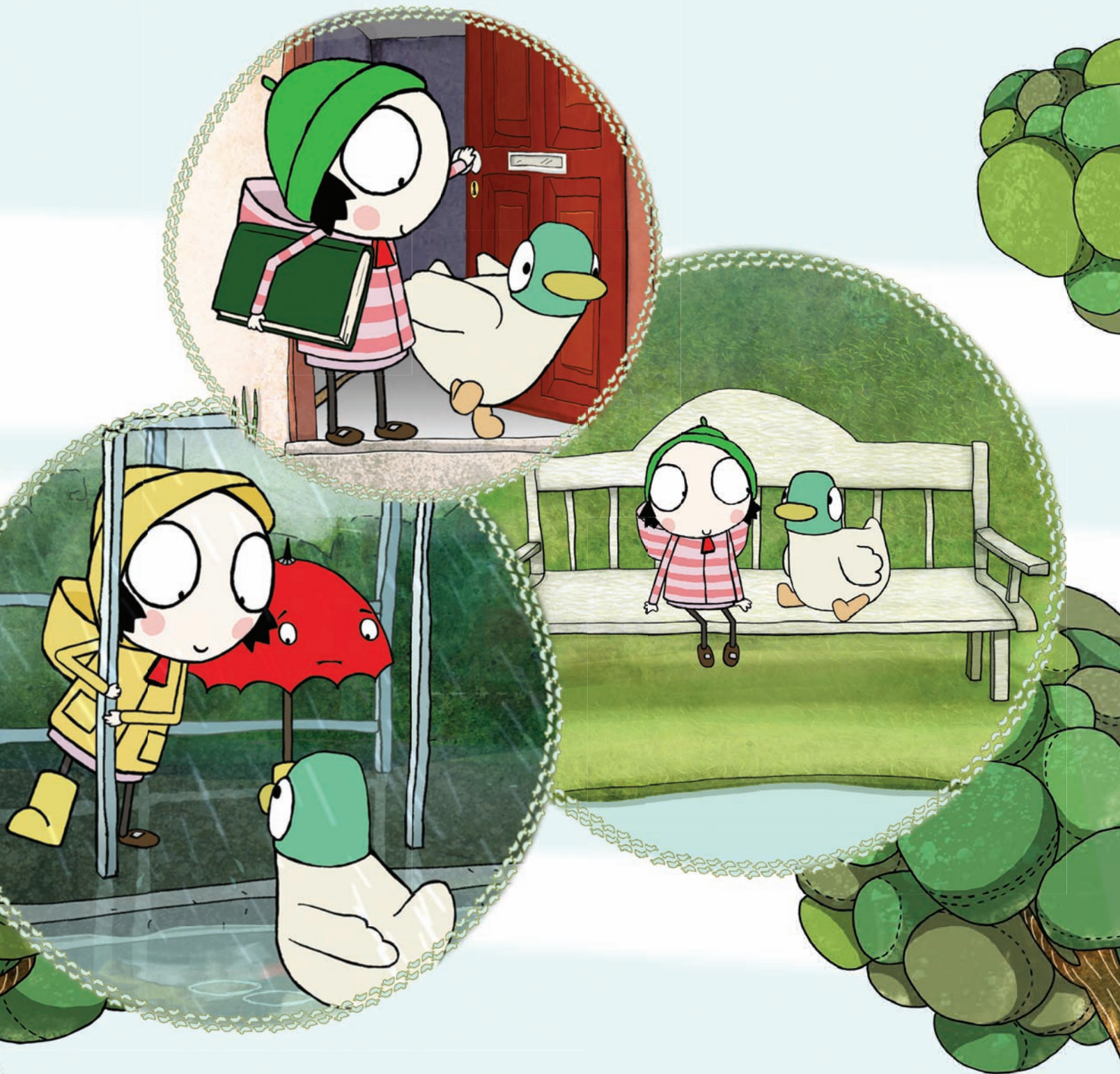
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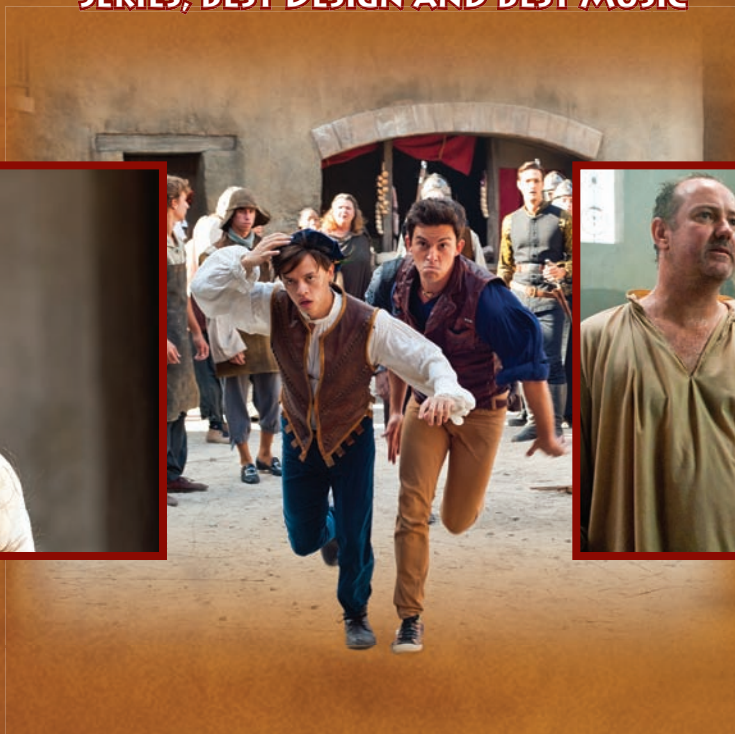
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Money, money, money

Anyone in the kids entertainment biz would have had to been trapped under a rock to have missed the news about the box-office record set by *The Oogieloves in the Big Balloon Adventure* over Labor Day weekend. It's not exactly one a filmmaker wants to go down in the history books for. The movie, aimed squarely at kids ages one to three, was the worst wide theatrical release ever in North America, taking in an average of just US\$207 per theater across 2,160 screens over the three-day weekend.



Reasons for the box-office failure of one-time Teletubbies marketer Kenn Viselman's comeback project are myriad. Mass-market advertising began too late to raise awareness for a relatively unknown property. Toddlers cannot articulate their desires on a good day, let alone tell their parents they want to see something they didn't know existed. Parents wouldn't contemplate taking a toddler to a theater. Initial reviews were less than stellar. I could go on.

Of all the press coverage the project has received from consumer media, what I've found most interesting is that *The Wall Street Journal* revealed *The Oogieloves in the Big Balloon*

Adventure reportedly cost US\$60 million to make and market. The paper said Viselman culled that money from a \$100-million pool, raised through a private equity fund led by a Michigan-based real estate developer. Imagine the number of beautiful and truly original preschool shows we have seen mired in development that US\$60 million could put into production?

There does appear to be a disconnect between private equity and tangible knowledge of the current kids entertainment landscape. But the money is there. That box-office record proves it is possible to find the cash. What eager producers really need is a better way to connect with those potential investors, educate them about the modern-day workings of this business, and ultimately, give them more choices on where to put that money. I can't draw a roadmap for you, but maybe this little tale can serve as inspiration. And as for Viselman? Don't worry. He's planning on moving forward with two sequels. "We've now got the notoriety we were trying to get for weeks before the film opened," he told US entertainment biz site TheWrap.com. Waiter, I'll have whatever he's having.

Cheers,
Lana

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the next issue of
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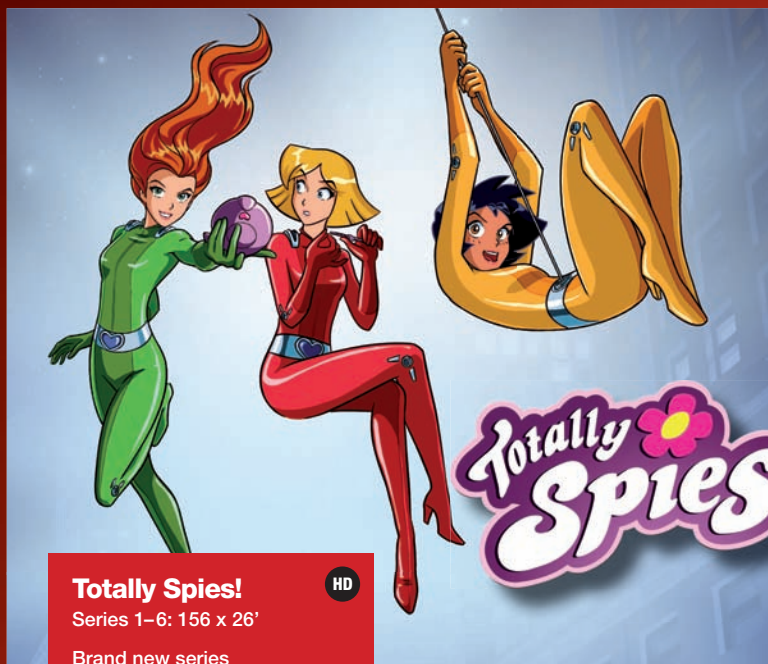
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Totally Spies!

Highlights for MIPCOM...



Totally Spies!

Series 1-6: 156 x 26'

Brand new series
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HD



The Ranch

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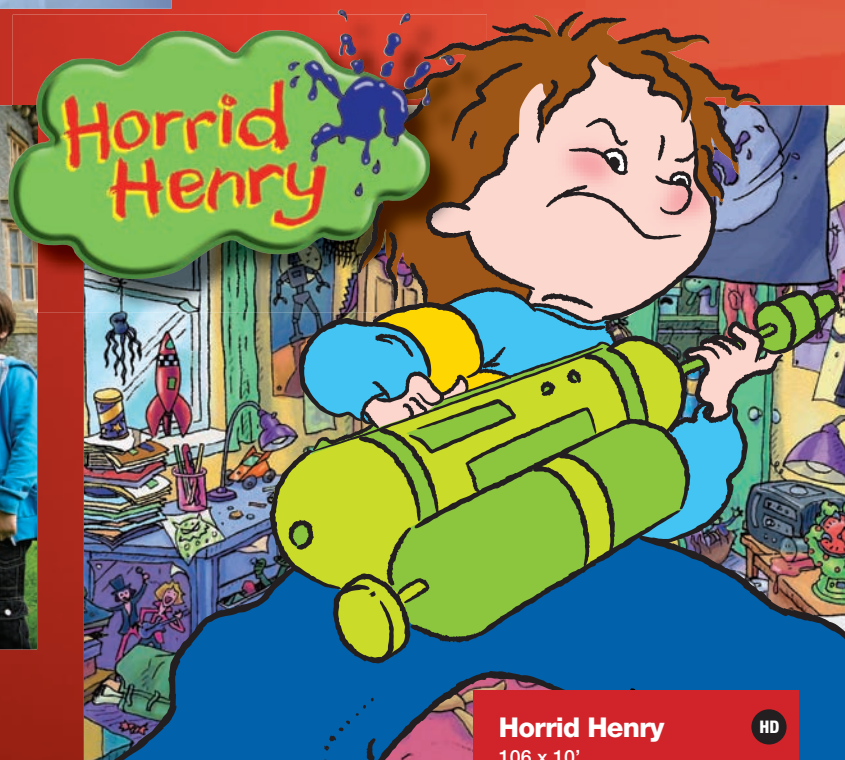


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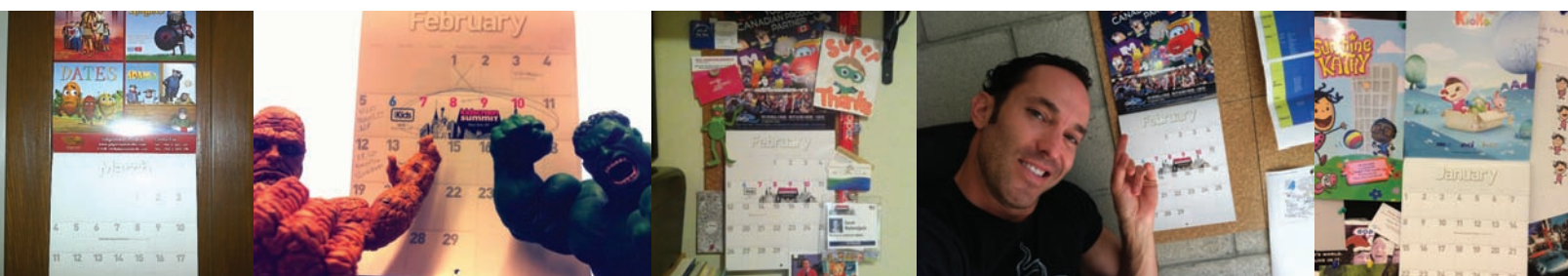
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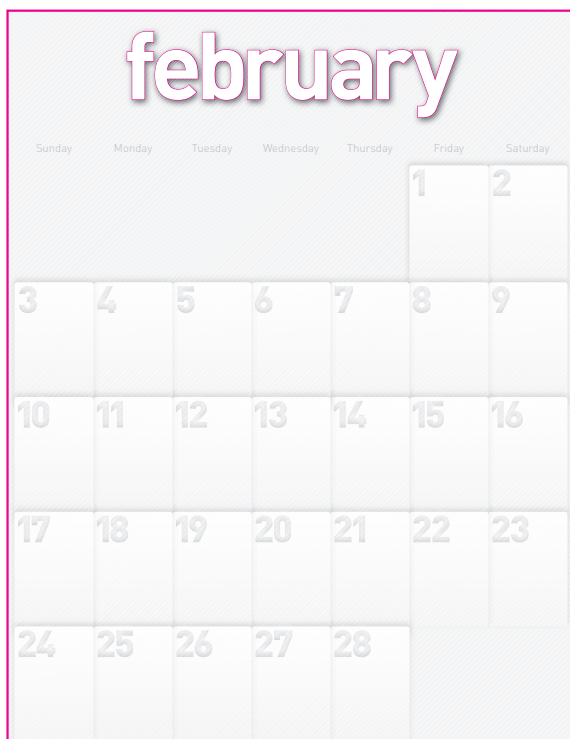
The second annual Kidscreen Calendar is in development, and will be mailed with our February/March 2013 issue and distributed in the Kidscreen Summit Delegate Bags. Now we're looking for advertisers to brand each month with a big, glossy kids show image!

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What is it?

Neither a market nor a conference, the **Asian Animation Summit** will feature presentations of new kids TV concepts from Australia, Korea, Malaysia and Singapore that are in early stages of financing and development.

Sign up and you'll spend two days taking a first look at projects that have been carefully selected based on their global-market potential and quality—some are fully developed with at least 15% of their budgets secured, and some are still in development and seeking initial financing. But any one of them could be the industry's next big hit!

Who else will be there?

At least 300 attendees are expected to take part in the first AAS, and a number of broadcasters are already planning to be there. From Asia, we anticipate groups from: Australia's **ABC TV**; Malaysia's **Media Prima**, **Astro**, **RTM** and **TV Al-Hijrah**; Korea's **KBS**, **EBS** and **Tooniverse**; Singapore's **Mediacorp**; and the Asian offices of **Nickelodeon**, **Disney** and **Cartoon Network**.

And from the international market, these are just some of our confirmed guests:

Jules Borkent – SVP, Programming & Acquisitions, Nickelodeon International

Karen Miller – Executive Director of Acquisitions and Co-Productions, Disney Channels Worldwide

Jocelyn Hamilton – VP of Original Programming, Kids, Comedy & Drama, Corus Entertainment

Henrietta Hurford-Jones – Director of CBeebies Investment, BBC Worldwide

Laurence Blaevoet – Director of Youth Programming, Canal+

Carole Bonneau – VP of Programming, TELETOON Canada

Frank Dietz – Deputy Program Director/Head of Acquisitions and Co-Productions, Super RTL

Luca Milano – Head of Animation Production, RAI Fiction

Sarah Muller – VP of Development, CBBC, BBC Children's

Nicole Keeb – Head of International Co-Productions & Acquisitions, Children and Youth, ZDF

Tiphaine de Raguenel – Head of Children and Youth Activities, France Télévisions

Where and when?

Hosted by MDeC (Multimedia Development Corporation), the first AAS will take place in Kuala Lumpur on December 10 & 11, 2012. The venue is a five-star hotel in the city center to be announced shortly, and attendees will be able to book deluxe accommodations there at a generously discounted rate.

AAS has been optimally timed to take place just two days after Asia Television Forum (December 5-7), giving you a chance to experience both events easily in one trip, with a weekend in between to chill out and explore.



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Children series, 7-10 year olds
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Jelly Jamm (52 x 11')
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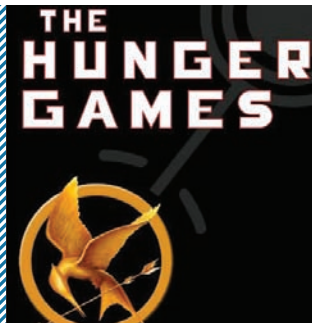


The List

Five things on our radar this month

1 Frenemies no more

Two Canadian kids entertainment companies are joining forces. DHX Media acquired rival prodco and distributor Cookie Jar Entertainment in mid-August. The deal combines Cookie Jar's 6,000 half hours from its animated library of series that contains like *Johnny Test*, *Berenstain Bears* and *Caillou* with DHX Media's 2,500 half hours of animated and live-action kids programming. The deal will also give DHX access to Cookie Jar's digital distribution operation, which has established ties with online heavyweights Netflix, Comcast, Amazon, Dish, Hulu and Google. When all the t's are crossed and i's dotted in mid-October, Cookie Jar CEO Michael Hirsh will become executive chairman, while DHX's current CEO Michael Donovan retains his position. Moreover, the merger further consolidates the Canadian kids entertainment field. It's too soon to say what kind of power this new super-indie might have with the country's kidsnets, but you can bet our curiosity is piqued.



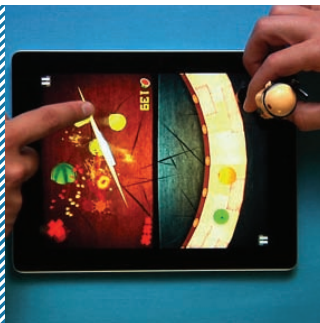
2 Book sales skyrocket

Who says kids are reading less these days? While Cassandras have warned of the end of the written word, it seems that the kids publishing industry is doing well, thank you very much. According to US industry org BookStats, revenues in the children's category were up 12% to US\$2.78 billion last year. While Harry Potter and The Hunger Games have run their course, these blockbusters have likely had a halo effect, giving the industry a sustained and welcome boost.



3 FTC stays busy

The US Federal Trade Commission proposed revisions to COPPA regulations in August. Shortly afterwards, the Center for Digital Democracy and 13 other children's consumer watchdog orgs filed complaints with the FTC against six child-targeted websites, including Nick.com and CartoonNetwork.com. They allege the sites breached children's online privacy laws, pre-COPPA changes. Heads up, digital content developers: Those loopholes are closing up quickly.



4 Breaking new ground

Mattel is banking on its new Apptivity line to bring the virtual and real worlds together to light up cash registers this holiday season. The new line is actually made from conductive plastic that interacts with iPad apps like *Angry Birds* and *Cut the Rope*. Mattel has also loaded up on licenses for the buzzed-about toys and plans to release Apptivity sets for Hot Wheels, Monster High, WWE Rumblers and Batman, among others.



5 Patent wars escalate

The dispute between tech giants Apple and Samsung came to a head in August, with Apple claiming a major victory. A jury ordered Samsung to pay its rival more than US\$1 billion in damages for copyright infringement. So will the ruling help Apple close the sales gap between iOS and Android, or will it stifle innovation across the board? Tune in next month. Samsung's appealed the decision. Surprise (not).

➔ To keep up with the news as it happens, check out Kidscreen.com daily.



"I didn't set out to be in the kids business, it just worked out that way," says Cartoon Network president **Stuart Snyder**. He credits his stints as president of both WWE and Feld Entertainment, which produced the likes of Barnum & Bailey Circus and Disney on Ice, with his kids entertainment know-how. "It's about paying attention to detail to know your fans and do your personal best to satisfy them and make them as happy as can be."

An agent for change and a master of success

The gig As president and chief operating officer of Turner's animation, young adults & kids media division, Snyder oversees all aspects of Cartoon Network, Boomerang and Adult Swim's operations, including their programming, financing, consumer products, digital domains and animation studios. He also works with Turner International on programming strategies for Cartoon Network in Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean and Japan.

Early beginnings Snyder's career in entertainment began at age 13 working in his father's music store located in the Catskill Mountains in New York State. Throughout his teens, Snyder helped run the shop, where he dealt directly with musicians working in the area's vibrant hotel entertainment industry, and learned first-hand the merits of customer service, inventory tracking and marketing. As a business major at Binghamton University, Snyder says he considers his true degree was really earned in extra-curricular and student activities, particularly through running concerts, films and lecture series through student council. He parlayed this experience as an amateur film buyer on campus into his first industry position at MGM's non-theatrical division, licensing movies to institutions in the South Eastern US.

Career Trajectory Snyder first caught Turner's attention while he was heading up sales and marketing at LIVE Entertainment, one of the largest indie home entertainment companies of the 1980s. Turner was transitioning from a cable provider to an entertainment company and poached Snyder for the role of GM. Within his first two weeks on the job, Snyder was setting up negotiations to buy one of two companies—New Line Cinema or Castlerock Entertainment.

"Ted [Turner] even admits that he didn't expect to get both of them," jokes Snyder. The film libraries of those two acquisitions helped turn Turner's distribution pipeline into a lightning rod for more growth. And by the time the company was sold to Time-Warner five years later, Snyder had helped it evolve from a US\$20 million outfit to a US\$500 million home entertainment company.

Not long after, Snyder returned back into the live-event realm, where he was first COO of Feld Entertainment, which ran Ringling Bros., Barnum & Bailey and Disney on Ice, which led to his step over to the WWE as president of the wrestling juggernaut. "The experience crystallized for me the power and importance of satisfying your audience," says Snyder. "That has carried over with me throughout my career and is so important with what I'm doing now."

Getting animated Snyder's next move took him over the border to Cinar Animation in Montreal, Canada, where he was charged with growing the fledgling company. Besides undergoing a course in animation production 101, "that assignment earned me my international law degree and my Wall Street degree," jokes Snyder. (He had to immerse himself in the intricacies of Canadian tax incentives and co-production treaties.)

Full Circle In 2005, Snyder returned to Atlanta to lead GameTap, Turner's new subscriber-based online gaming platform. Two years later, the site's management was folded into Animation, Young Adults and Kids Media, a new division that corralled all Cartoon Network and Adult Swim digital assets. And in 2008, he was promoted to his current role, where besides running the channels and websites domestically and internationally, he is an advocate for youth issues and is credited with helping spark CN's Stop Bullying: Speak Up social responsibility program.

"There are real problems in the world, but kids feel they can't do anything about them," says Snyder. "We helped them by using our platforms to share tools and help them make an impact." The initiative is also rolling out this year internationally starting in Latin American.

Staying ahead of the curve is a major focus for Snyder's team, which this August released CN 2.0, a mobile app featuring a slip screen interface that allows users to play games simultaneously while watch Cartoon Network shows including Adventure Time, Ben 10 and Regular Show.

"We are very focused on promoting TV Everywhere," says Snyder. "We're looking to maximize those opportunities so that our viewers can enjoy content wherever and whenever they want." —Kate Calder

Out of Office

Tales from the frequent fliers club



Yvonne Body

Head of acquisitions, Beyond Distribution

1. In my carry-on

Laptop, meeting notes, magazines, nuts



2. My go-to gadget

Bose noise-cancelling headphones

3. On the fly

Stay calm, no point in panicking if flights are cancelled or delayed

4. Preferred in-air tunes

Whatever I'm most into, currently Blunderbuss by Jack White

5. Best in-flight food

The Asian vegetarian option is usually envied by my meat-eating neighbors

6. Best power-lunch

You see more people queueing at the sandwich kiosks on the Croisette than in any fancy restaurant



7. Window or aisle?

Window, although I always seem to end up over the wing



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The Doozers land in the spotlight, starring in a new CGI series set to debut in 2013

Doozers get working on series, big sale to Turner EMEA

Most *Fraggle Rock* fans would describe Doozers as the tiny green construction workers that diligently worked away in the background of the classic series' underground community. Coinciding with 30th anniversary of *Fraggle Rock* in 2013, The Jim Henson Company has created a new 52 x 11-minute spin-off series that puts the diminutive laborers into the spotlight. And Turner EMEA, for one, likes the new direction. The broadcaster has snapped up *Doozers* for expanding pan-Euro preschool channel Cartoonito's fall 2013 schedule.

Co-produced with Canada's DHX Media, the new series stars Spike, Mollybolt, Flex and Daisy Wheel. The four kid Doozers live in Doozer Creek, a self-sustainable community (located just beyond the view of humans). The action really takes place in a high-tech, eco-friendly enchanted forest, where the Doozer pals share a passion for inventing.

"We call the Doozers playful inventors," says Richard Goldsmith, EVP of global distribution at TJHC. "It's about exploration and working together with others, and to do so they borrow things from nature to make their world and the larger world around them better."

"There was a combination of appeal for us in that it is a well-known brand, and it's something we didn't have on the channel in the sense that it's a make-and-do series with an engineering aspect," adds Cecilia Persoon, VP of acquisitions and co-productions for EMEA at Turner Broadcasting.

Goldsmith says there is a possibility that Turner will pick up the series for other territories. "But there is so much interest globally that it is really going to be a focus of ours at MIPCOM this year to close deals," he adds. He's also open to licenses in some territories where the property might start on an SVOD platform before it goes to DVD.

The company also plans to carry the series' inventing and building philosophy into interactive digital content and consumer products, though its currently keeping mum on specifics. TJHC is now in talks with licensees for products across categories. "The stories are about making things, so it allows us to do more with ancillary businesses such as CP and interactive," says Goldsmith.

"Everything that is being done in 2013 to celebrate the 30th anniversary of *Fraggle Rock* will help lead up to the premiere of *Doozers*," he says. The anniversary year will see classic *Fraggle Rock* episodes rolling out across international territories on various platforms, as well as special DVD releases. —Kate Calder

On the circuit

Notes for the industry travel diary

September 19-23

Ottawa International Animation Festival
Ottawa, Canada

animationfestival.ca

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Filmmakers, producers, artists, students and cartoon enthusiasts from around the world will descend on Canada's capital city when it hosts the 36th edition of the largest animation festival of its kind in North America. Attracting more than 27,000 attendees on average, the festival receives more than 2,000 entries each year. New this year is a non-gameplay animation category and the best Canadian student animation film award.

October 6-7

MIP Junior
Cannes, France

mipworld.com/mipjunior

mipjunior

As a precursor to MIPCOM (October 8 to 11), MIP Junior celebrates its 20th anniversary by offering an international showcase for kids programming screenings. More than 1,000 kids titles are set to be presented this year, and highlights include a new one-day Digital Kids conference on the 7th and the always-popular Kid's Jury results, where kids pick the winning shows from a group of finalists in the preschool, kids and tweens categories.

December 10-11

Asian Animation Summit
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

asiananimationsummit.com

asian
animation summit

This brand-new annual event is designed to showcase Asia's strongest animated projects looking for investors and partners, and to stimulate co-production and co-financing of animation in the region. Participants will spend two days attending presentations of roughly 40 new children's TV series concepts—some partially financed, and some in development—from Australia, Korea, Malaysia and Singapore. And with plenty of time built into the schedule for meetings and casual networking, it couldn't be easier to follow up immediately on projects of interest. AAS is also optimally timed to take place two days after Asia Television Forum (December 5 to 7), with a weekend in between to travel from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur.

➔ A full listing of Industry Events is available at kidscreen.com/events

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Like totally tuned in

AwesomenessTV taps into a growing tween audience on YouTube

What AwesomenessTV, a new comedy-centric YouTube channel for tweens and tweens that launched in June with a lineup of 15 celebrity-infused shows with episodes ranging from three to 10 minutes in length. Currently, the channel's roster includes *IMO*, a pop-culture talk show for girls modeled after grownup gabfest *The View*; sports programs *That Was Awesome* hosted by NBA Star Blake Griffin, *Sk8 Spottz* and *How to Be Awesome*, which features tips from pro athletes; and an original scripted teen drama *The Runaways* that bowed at the end of last month.

How Founder Brian Robbins, who has more than 10 years of experience producing shows such as *All That* for Nickelodeon and The CW's *Smallville* and *One Tree Hill*, started the channel after independently producing three movies for Nick based on self-made YouTube teen star Fred Figglehorn. "If this kid was able to build all this on his own, without any help from anybody in Hollywood or any money, we could do it," says Robbins.

The Fred experience led to talks with YouTube, which was kicking off an original channels program last year. The online behemoth eventually gave Robbins the opportunity—and US\$5 million dollars—to design a youth channel.

Robbins drew inspiration from his two tween sons, who he says are indifferent to the device they use to consume content. However, he says that AwesomenessTV isn't banking on just creating disposable viral hits for which YouTube is famous. "We are building a consistent block of programming and create a loyalty with our audience," he contends.

Talking to the audience Just eight weeks after its launch, AwesomenessTV had amassed more than 15 million views, almost 100,000 subscribers and another US\$3.5 million from private investors. (Robbins has earmarked the cash to fund more original content and promotions.)

"With all the shows I've made over the years, we're having the most fun doing this," says Robbins. "It's so disruptive and we're getting to make the stuff we want, without any interference."

Being able to produce content quickly and nimbly is also important to Robbins. His staff keeps a close eye on the site's analytics and diligently monitors comments on the channel, Twitter and Facebook. "We listen to [our audience], and if the comments are positive, we'll give them more of what they want."

Next moves AwesomenessTV has two basic business models—selling access to eyeballs viewing its ad-supported YouTube channel and creating IPs with the potential to grow beyond their original platform and into other medium, such as network TV or feature films. (At press time, he was keeping tight lipped on an upcoming announcement about one of the channel's shows that is poised to do just that.)

So far, most of the content has been produced in-house, but Robbins says he's interested in fielding pitches for potential acquisition and co-production projects across the channel's comedy, reality, sports and music categories. —Kate Calder



In just eight weeks, upstart pro YouTube channel AwesomenessTV attracted 100,000 subscribers and 15 million views, and last month it launched its first original scripted drama, *The Runaways*

Know your audience

By Jim Benton



If your show bores me, I will run away to the Internet, and you will NEVER see me again.

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In a major executive shake-up, long-time president of Nickelodeon Animation, **Brown Johnson**, has exited the company to pursue personal creative endeavors while 14-year Nick veteran **Russell Hicks [A]** has been upped to the brand-new position of president of content development and production for the Nickelodeon Group. Hicks moves into this role after serving as Nickelodeon's CCO since 2008 and will continue to report to Nickelodeon Group president **Cyma Zarghami**. Working from Nick's L.A.-area offices, Hicks will be tasked with leading the company's live-action, animation de-

velopment and production teams for all of its content platforms. Executives now reporting to Hicks include **Margie Cohn**, who has been promoted to the new role of president of content development for live-action, animation and digital; **Paula Kaplan**, now EVP of current series; **Teri Weiss**, EVP of Nickelodeon preschool development and production; **Alison Dexter**, EVP of Nickelodeon Productions; **Rich Magallanes**, SVP of animation, current series; and **Keith Dawkins**, SVP and GM for Nick Jr., Nicktoons and TeenNick channels. Prior to working at Nickelodeon, Hicks served as VP of marketing for Cartoon Network/Turner brands for Warner Bros. The appointment comes as Nickelodeon recently ramped up its TV offerings for this fall and

into 2013 by greenlighting 14 new projects covering live-action, animation and TV movies. During her Nick career, Johnson led the kidsnet's partnerships with DreamWorks Animation, as well as the new, CGI-animated *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* series. She also led Nickelodeon's preschool programming, helping to hatch hits *Blue's Clues* and *Dora the Explorer*, for more than two decades. In other Nickelodeon executive moves, animation industry veteran **David Steinberg** joins Nick Animation Studios as its new SVP of production and nine-year Nick veteran **Jamie Drew [B]** has been promoted to SVP

digital and recreation businesses.

Switching to acquisitions, Canada's DHX Media made a powerful consolidation move that further strengthens its digital business by acquiring rival Canuck animation producer and distributor Cookie Jar Entertainment in a cash, stock and debt deal valued at US\$112 million. According to DHX, the takeover will create the largest independent owner of children's programming in the world. Also DHX plans to leverage Cookie Jar's distribution ties with web-based providers including Amazon, Comcast, DISH, Hulu, Google and Vivendi. At the deal's closing next

leveraged across movies, television, home entertainment, consumer products, digital, theme parks and live entertainment channels. DreamWorks, which named **Gregg Taylor** as its new head of development in January, expects to close the deal by September 30.

Moving across the Atlantic, UK pay-TV broadcaster Sky has acquired London-based producer-distributor Parthenon Media Group and its companies Barbershop Studios and 422 South, as part of a deal that will see it launch a distribution arm to market the international rights to its content. The move is part of Sky's plan to spend up to US\$925

its first head of licensing. The move sees RHE look for multi-platform business opportunities across TV, licensing and merchandising, gaming and live events. Reporting to **Nigel Waters**, group commercial director of The Random House Group, Edwards joins RHE from her previous role as VP of international consumer products at Discovery Communications.

On the animation front, Tokyo, Japan-based Toei Animation has upped long-time Toei exec **Katsuhiko Takagi** to president from his most recent position of senior director. Takagi will continue to grow the studio's international part-

people



ment and production teams for all of its content platforms. Executives now reporting to Hicks include **Margie Cohn**, who has been promoted to the new role of president of content development for live-action, animation and digital; **Paula Kaplan**, now EVP of current series; **Teri Weiss**, EVP of Nickelodeon preschool development and production; **Alison Dexter**, EVP of Nickelodeon Productions; **Rich Magallanes**, SVP of animation, current series; and **Keith Dawkins**, SVP and GM for Nick Jr., Nicktoons and TeenNick channels. Prior to working at Nickelodeon, Hicks served as VP of marketing for Cartoon Network/Turner brands for Warner Bros. The appointment comes as Nickelodeon recently ramped up its TV offerings for this fall and

of strategy and business development for Nickelodeon Group. Steinberg, the former studio head at Toronto's Starz Animation, will lead all animation series production and digital initiatives and oversee daily operations at Nickelodeon Animation Studios in Burbank, California. During his five year-stint at Starz, he helped grow the company's reputation in visual effects and CGI animation working on features including *Gnomeo and Juliet* and 9. In her new role, Drew, who was most recently Nick VP of strategy and business development, will be responsible for supporting senior management in the development of long-term strategies for Nickelodeon, Nick at Nite, TeenNick, Nick Jr., Nicktoons, and Nick's consumer products,

month, Cookie Jar CEO **Michael Hirsh** becomes the executive chairman of DHX, while CEO **Michael Donovan** retains his current position.

South of the border, DreamWorks Animation has entered an agreement to buy New York-based Classic Media for US\$155 million from Boomerang Media Holdings. The deal sees DreamWorks scoop up Classic Media's vast library of kids and family entertainment titles (450 in total), which contains more than 6,100 episodes of animated and live-action programming including *Casper the Friendly Ghost*, *Postman Pat*, *Noddy* and *Olivia*. Classic Media's comic book archive is also part of the deal, as well as a number of classic holiday TV specials. The new brands are expected to be

million per year on original content by 2014. Leading the new operation within Sky is Parthenon founder and CEO **Carl Hall [C]**, who will report to **Sophie Turner Laing**, Sky's MD of entertainment, news and broadcast operations. Part of the deal also sees BSkyB acquire Parthenon's 48% equity interest in Arcadia Entertainment, part of the Parthenon Group. Arcadia's president **John Wesley** will retain his position within the Halifax-based indie production company.

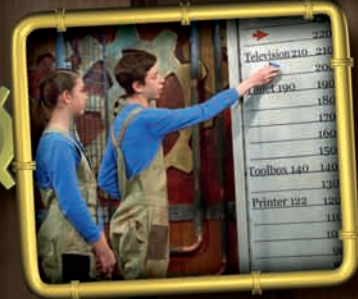
In other business expansion news, The Random House Group has launched a new arm, Random House Enterprises (RHE). To head up the venture, the publisher has hired **Jo Edwards [D]** as

nerships and expand the company into new markets with its library of hit animated properties and new programming.

In publishing moves, Penguin Children's Books UK has expanded **Eric Huang**'s publishing director of the media and entertainment group remit to include the role of new business and IP acquisitions director. Huang is now responsible for leading the company's transition from publisher to content provider across multiple platforms including digital, entertainment and merchandising. During his time at Penguin, Huang has acquired publishing rights for hit properties including Moshi Monsters, Peppa Pig, Club Penguin and Skylanders.

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Finding the universal funny bone

BY KATE CALDER

Creating cross-cultural comedy that jumps borders for kids and co-producers

Navigating co-productions is a necessary challenge in the kids TV biz these days, but finessing toilet humor across territories may require maintaining an even finer balance. That's what Toronto, Canada-based Nelvana discovered when it went about developing its new series *Psycho Butt*, a co-production with New York's Scholastic Entertainment and Sydney, Australia's Studio Moshi that's inspired by the four-book series *The Day My Butt Went Psycho*. (It has sold roughly 1.3 million copies worldwide.)

For starters, the property's design has come a long way since the first book debuted in Australia in 2001, featured a photo-real image of a naked "bum" on its cover. Realizing something like that would never work for North American broadcast, Scholastic and Nelvana worked together to come up with an anthropomorphic and cartoonish character design—complete with arms and legs—for the butts in question. The design was also a big departure from the line-drawn butt illustrations that appeared in later books.

"Our approach was that if the majority of butts are more character-like in terms of the way they look and act, then there will be more general acceptance and we won't have the challenges we might face if we tried to be more graphic or realistic," says Irene Weibel, VP and head of Nelvana's studio. Nelvana also focused on giving the story more comedic appeal than the book series, which tells the tale of a butt revolution. "Our show picks up after the butt war revolution...it focuses on the peaceful time, but there is a faction of butts that still want to take over," says Weibel.

The graphic imagery may be toned down, but the concept's original ridiculousness remains. Main character Zack's posterior is a talking, walking butt with a short fuse that literally bounces off the walls and shoots up into the sky when he goes psycho. "You have certain boundaries and we wanted this to be something that was comfortable for a seven-year-old."

Comedy across cultures

Writing a high level of comedy while being sensitive to regional tastes and colloquialisms was top-of-mind when Nickelodeon ordered an English format of live-action telenovela *House of Anubis* from Liverpool, England-based Lime Productions and Studio 100 Media in Belgium. The original series, made for the German and



Psycho Butt toned down the posterior visuals from the Aussie book series and created butt characters to carry the zany comedy



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Dutch markets, was re-developed and produced to air the UK and the US market in 2011—a first for Nick US.

Nick International's SVP of production and development Nina Hahn explains that developing a cross-cultural show with an entry point for US kids cut across a lot of decision points. "Can you show underpants coming out of their trousers, which is a cultural norm in some places, but not in others?" muses Hahn. The series had a to find a sweet spot that was meaningful to all cultures and didn't water down what Nickelodeon was trying to do, which was make a series full of laughs and frightening moments.

An American script consultant was brought on-board to make sure the pacing felt relevant to a US audience, but the UK writing team was also given the go-ahead to craft scripts infused with British humor that kids everywhere would love, much like Lime's TV movie *Angus Thongs*, which had lingo that US kids didn't know, but loved nonetheless.

"We didn't want to exclude words just because they were unknown to American kids," says Hahn. "Instead we introduced them and held their hands though it." For example, when jumpers (sweaters) or trainers (running shoes) or somebody being "chuffed" (pleased) was mentioned, the writers made sure a US character asked what the word meant.

The real challenge, Hahn says, isn't so much the actual material but its presentation. The American style of acting tends towards making a big delivery, in which everything is presented in an over-the-top, loud or exaggerated manner. She explains there can be awkwardness on set when a British actor is not trained to deliver on that scale with the same sense of noise and passion. "You have to make sure that you are trying to get as close to that as you can without compromising the British style or making it feel corny," says Hahn.

New partners, new processes

Besides ironing out cultural differences in script, Nickelodeon also had to navigate the differences between how UK studios produce versus how they do it in the US. "We're very hands-on at Nickelodeon," says Hahn. "We're very much a partner, which is a slightly different cultural path than what the UK is used to, where broadcasters often function as commissioners."

The UK production team was introduced to the American practice of having writers stationed on-set to rewrite lines and work with the actors if a joke fell flat during a scene. For its part, the US-based Nickelodeon crew had to adapt to the much more static UK sets that weren't as flexible as what they were used to, not having features like fly-away walls, for example.

As in live action, Nelvana's Weibel says the labor-intensive process of setting up the logistical pipeline and deciding on software, deliverables and work split is just as time-consuming for animated series.

"There is no standard way a studio works," says Weibel. "Everybody has their own style, so with every co-production you have to start from scratch and build a pipeline together." In *Psycho Butt's* case, Teletoon Canada, the series' commissioning broadcaster,



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has been very involved with Nelvana's parentco Corus on the production. And Down Under, Andrew Davies at Studio Moshi has been working with Aussie commissioning broadcaster Nine Network. "It's complicated and difficult, but not in a controversial way—that's just the norm for co-productions," he concedes.

Staying on point

To get the ball rolling on *Randy Cunningham: Ninth Grade Ninja*, Disney Channels EMEA introduced its two creators/writers to L.A.-based Titmouse, which is leading pre-production creative for the series, and then commissioned Boulder Media in Dublin, Ireland to handle the animation process through to post-production.

"Animation is a collective affair. No one person can do it—not even a few people can do it. You need at least 100 people working on an animated series," says Disney EMEA's VP of original series, Orion Ross. "The challenge is wrangling it and making sure it stays focused behind a single creative vision."

But the benefit, says Ross, is that having smart, funny people contribute extra humor and context, at every stage from script to storyboard to third take, adds layers of detail and a density that lets an episode reveal more every time you watch it.



For *House of Anubis*,
Nickelodeon cast actors
from both sides of the pond
to create an international,
US-friendly hit

"When you're playing for comic timing and the subtlety of expression, it's really important that the whole crew gets the joke," says Ross. If there are different visions colliding and poor co-ordination, the end result is what the broadcast exec dreads most—something he calls "co-production sludge." He explains the key is having a simple and relatable concept right from the start. The idea that drives *Randy Cunningham*, he says, fits that bill perfectly—a buddy comedy in which one friend is the secret ninja guardian of his high school, but isn't very good at it. Add to that the fact that Randy's ninja duties get in the way of the friendship, and there's a whole lot of humor to mine.

Keeping the pace

Similar to Nickelodeon's *House of Anubis*, making sure *Randy Cunningham* had an entry point for US viewers was key. Keeping with the fast pace of American-style comedy writing, in which every scripted page has a laugh-out-loud moment, proved to be the guiding principle here.

"There's a new generation now that has grown up watching smarter, funnier, faster cartoons," says Ross, adding that *Family Guy* has set a new bar for gag rates. So for 10-year-olds, comedy has to be sharp and quick, but it also has to work on different levels. "They still love a fart joke, but they will also like a witty pop culture reference," he contends. "Your viewers are learning sponges, incredibly smart and incredibly fickle. They are changing their taste and changing their minds all the time and waiting to be impressed."

Though Ross's crew ultimately set out to make a show that works internationally, he says that if you try to please everybody right out of the gate, you wind up pleasing no one. "You want your comedy to be universal, but you have to start somewhere." Ross's advice—think about one single kid in the demo and whether or not it would work for him or her. "If you think in terms of too many demos, you'll be paralyzed, so make it funny for one person." For Ross, that person is his 10-year-old nephew, Henry. "He's much smarter than me," he admits, wryly.



The new Brazilian kidscaster hopes to build the local production biz, starting with its first live-action series *D.P.A.*

Gloob gets going

New Globosat channel on the hunt for content to suit Brazilian kids

The challenge June saw the launch of Gloob, Brazil's new 24-hour channel targeting kids ages five to eight. Though it didn't have ratings to report at press time, the net boasts carriage on the nation's primary pay-TV cable operators to reach eight million households (55% market penetration), and more than 122,000 Facebook likes in less than three months. Gloob populated its initial schedule with a raft of international live-action and animated series—all Brazilian exclusives—and is looking to grow its offering by adding more exclusive acquisitions and locally produced content along with building out its multi-platform presence.

The programming Gloob director Paulo Marinho says the current content fits the channel's brand strategy to inspire and entertain kids with series themed around friendship, courage, respect for difference and diversity. Gloob acquired content from France, Germany, the US, Canada and Italy with toon series like *The Davincibles* (Moonscoop), *Ned & Fred* (CAKE) and *Clang Invasion* (DHX). Live-action acquisitions so far include *Me & My Monsters* (The Jim Henson Company) and *Wingin' It* (Temple Street). The channel airs classic shows such as *Smurfs* and *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe* to round out its schedule and attract nostalgic parents as co-viewers. Marinho says weekend movies are also a key part of the scheduling.

Brazilian flavor At launch, 80% of Gloob's schedule was made up of acquisitions and it also drew from parentco Globosat's kids library. However, Marinho says the programming

team is on a mission to increase the amount of Brazilian content. He explains that starting this September, new legislation will make airing 3.5 hours a week of local content mandatory for the majority of pay-TV channels. Of these 3.5 hours, 50% must come from local producers. The other half can be owned by the channels themselves.

Gloob has already bowed its first local live-action production, *D.P.A. Detetives do Prédio Azul* (*Blue Building Detectives*), co-produced with Conspiracao Films. The kidnet also airs Brazilian music video clips from local singers as interstitials, and two more local productions are planned for this year. As for animation, Marinho says he wants to develop local series and help grow Brazil's animation industry.

Gloob online The channel's website includes online games and a special site for parents that offers advice and cultural content. Gloob content is also available on Globosat's VOD site Muu, which gives the channel's subscribers second-run access to shows via PCs, connected TVs, consoles or Apple mobile devices. Marinho says the channel is also developing an app exclusively for *D.P.A.*

Next moves Marinho and his team will be actively looking to acquire new series at MIP Junior next month, with an preference for non-aggressive content and comedies. If you're looking to reach out before the market, acquisition executives who'll be on-hand include: Claudia Macedo, director of content research and acquisitions (cmacedo@globosat.com.br); Juliana Martins, manager of research and acquisitions manager (jmartins@globosat.com.br); and Barbara Adams, research and acquisitions (badams@globosat.com.br). —Kate Calder



Behind the design

Word play

The in-house team designed a logo for Gloob (an anagram of Globo) using colorful block letters that fit the cheerful, curious, colorful, playful and irreverent personality of the channel.

Child's play

"The colored letters are blocks with different proportions and are imbalanced, as if a child was just playing with them," says Marinho.

Real play

The 3D block letters stand out against an infinite white background, in which real kids play with the logo, and appear to be part of the brand.

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Toopy & Binoo's
2D characters will
debut as puppets
in next year's
season three



Reinventing through role reversal

Producers reinvigorate preschool series *Toopy & Binoo*
by moving from 2D animation to live-action puppetry

We're used to seeing puppets reinvented as animated characters, but it's not often animated characters return to the screen as live-action puppets. That's just the step Montreal, Canada-based Echo Media (formerly Spectra Animation) took when it came time to produce season three of preschool series *Toopy & Binoo*. A new run of 67 x seven-minute eps are heading into production this fall and will deliver in spring 2013.

With the help of Toopy voice actor, Frank Meschkuleit, who's also a veteran Jim Henson-trained puppeteer, Echo went about creating Toopy and Binoo puppets and more than 20 additional puppets based on characters that exist in their world. The puppets are shot in front of a green screen so that the original 2D *Toopy & Binoo* animated backgrounds can be reused. Additionally, Echo is using technology that allows the show to have an animated foreground element, rather than the flat bottom traditionally used in TV puppetry.

Meschkuleit explains that bringing the two-inch, single-profile drawings to life was a challenge. "But I was determined implement everything I'd learned over the last 30 years and expand on it," he says. For example, the puppet-building team realized the elastic quality of Toopy's arms by creating limbs that extend beyond a foot. They also created a mechanism that allows the new puppet's eyes to move independently and built special arms that can show his hands reaching, pointing or grabbing onto something.

Presales for the third season include deals with preschool net Treehouse and SRC, both in Canada. Echo Media VP of international sales and licensing Michèle Dal Cin says she will be shopping the series to international broadcasters at MIPCOM. She's also on the hunt for new agents to focus on making sales in Europe and North America.

The first two animated series (104 x five minutes and 78 x two minutes), as well as 12 short interactive TV segments and six holiday specials, originally aired in Canada on Treehouse and Télé-Québec, US-based Spanish language channel v-Me, and in an additional 177 territories in 28 different languages. Online games and two-minute, curriculum-based *Toopy & Binoo* shorts also appeared on the PBS Kids Play subscription site. Dal Cin adds that Echo is also working on its strategy for US English TV broadcast sales of the all three seasons.

In the series' home territory, a *Toopy & Binoo* live theatrical stage show, produced by Winnipeg, Canada's Koba Entertainment, has sold more than 100,000 tickets across 63 towns and cities. And Dal Cin says there are plans to introduce the show into the US for its second touring season. She also expects the puppets will refresh the consumer products plan and talks are underway with licensees for toys, games, plush and party sets.

On the digital front, Echo is also developing four apps and there are plans for a *Toopy & Binoo*-branded YouTube channel, based on the IP's success on the online platform. Clips of the series have had more than 17 million views to date, and regularly see over one million views per month. —Kate Calder

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Pipeline

An early peek at shows on the development track



kids
4 to 6

Miss Lavender's School for Little Monsters

Ray Merrit, creator of preschool series *The Hive*, wanted to focus on the energy and excitement that buzzes when kids are brought together in large-ish groups. And this character-based show is meant to help kids develop the social skills they'll need to navigate those environments. To that end, he created a school for little monsters of all shapes, sizes and vibrant colors led by the kind and soft-spoken Miss Lavender. Lead character Blue is a lovable kid who continues to try his best despite his clumsiness, as he and his friends make their way through everyday monster life that includes puddle-splashing contests, a class pet that eats school supplies, and lunch boxes full of bugs and slime. Underpinning the visual gags and cute humor is a social-emotional curriculum that covers dealing with jealousy, competitiveness, sharing and teasing. At the end of each episode, viewers can unlock a featured character in app-based games and educational content on their mobile devices through the Intrasonic technology embedded in the show.

Studio: PPC Creative (London)

Style: CGI animation

Format: 52 x seven minutes

Budget: US\$4.4 million

Status: eOne UK is sponsoring the project at Cartoon Forum this month and PPC's parentco Smedvig is financing the pilot episode. PPC is on the hunt for co-pro partners.

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kids
2 to 5



Symo & Rose A five-year-old boy named Symo and his younger sister Rose go on adventures everyday from their bedroom mere minutes before the alarm clock goes off. Just before wakey wakey time, their furniture, toys, books or clothes are magically transformed. A sock becomes a snake, a scarf becomes an eel, and a bowtie becomes a colorful butterfly. As

each of these newly changed characters begins to tell a tale, Symo and Rose are catapulted into the story and sucked into an amazing adventure. The episodes are dialogue-free and rely on catchy music to set the tone of the adventure. Parents will also enjoy the surprise allusions to classic movies such as *Star Wars*, *King Kong* and *War of the Worlds*.

Studio: Gruppo Alconi (Treviso, Italy)

Style: 2D Flash animation

Format: 52 x six minutes

Budget: US\$4.5 million

Status: The studio will be shopping the series at MIP Jr to beef up presales, which so far include deals with RAI2 in Italy and Nelonen Media in Finland, as well as deals pending in Russia and Thailand. This fall, a few completed eps will air on www.kids.benetton.com as part of the retailer's Kids Community of Benetton campaign.

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NowTrending—Media

What's bubbling up in kid content culture



Disney Channel's
spooky comedy
Gravity Falls is pulling
in stellar US ratings

Gravity Falls rises with Disney ratings

Since launching at the end of June, Disney Channel's *Gravity Falls* has been steadily rising as one of the US net's highest-rated shows. The spooky comedy about twin brother and sister Dipper and Mabel, who get sent to live with their bizarre uncle in a Twin Peaks-esque town in Oregon, seems to be striking the right, if not slightly off-center, chord. The glowing results for the irreverent comedy coincide with the channel's overall success over the course of the summer. According to Nielsen, the channel ranked as the number-one US cable TV network for the first time in its history in total day and total viewers (1.95 million) and as TV's top network for kids two to 11 (1.12 million/2.7 rating), closing out the summer on a 12-week streak. Final cable channel ratings for August 25 (the last Saturday of that month) for kids six to 11 saw Disney Channel take the lead with a 4.1/22 rating over Nickelodeon (2.8/15) and Cartoon Network (1.4/8). For its part, *Gravity Falls* scored an impressive 4.7/21 rating that same day.

Keeping tabs on tablet stats

Kids are consuming content on myriad of platforms, especially tablets. And according to NPD's *Kids and Consumer Electronics: 2012 Edition*, kids tablet usage increased by 13% in 2012 compared to by 3% in 2011. The report also found tablet usage highest among young children. Other results from the survey revealed that homes with kids ages four to 14 own an average of 10 different devices, with kids using roughly five of them.

Another study from GfK Media has found that tablet owners spend 50% more time viewing content in an average session than a smartphone user. Additionally, at least half of all smartphone and tablet owners use their mobile devices while watching TV. The report found that tablet users were more likely to turn to TV apps for viewing shows, and smartphone users relied more on TV apps to access social media, schedules and the occasional series clips.



Disney Channel

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Swedish kids put SVTB on top

Factual entertainment and Christmas specials standout in Nordic nation



The Penguins of Madagascar, airing on public channel SVTB and Nickelodeon, was Sweden's only animated series that made the top-10 list of most-popular children's shows in Sweden

SVTB, the dedicated kids channel of national Swedish broadcaster SVT, dominates the market with kid viewers. SVTB's airs programming all day between 5 a.m. and 8 p.m. and has a 78% penetration in the country. In fact, SVTB's June market share among kids three to 14 sat at 36.1%, a good 27% higher than second-ranked kidnet Nickelodeon, which brought in a 8.6% share.

SVTB's top shows are locally produced entertainment and factual fare, which from July to December last year included *Julkalendern Tjuvarnas Jul*, an evergreen Christmas show so popular that it scored a 60.7% share of kids three to 14 (roughly 207,300 kids). The seasonal special is followed by *Lilla Aktuellt I Varlden*, a factual series that had a 55.8% share with 167,500 kid viewers. The only animated series in the top 10 is *The Penguins of Madagascar*, which ranks third with 151,000 young viewers on SVTB for a 56.2% share. And keeping with Swedish kids' tastes for local programming, other top-rated shows include *Evas Vinterplaster*, *Barda*, *Piraterna* and *SOS Vilda Djur*.

Eurodata TV research manager Johanna Karsenty explains that market shares are much lower for pay-TV channels in Sweden. Following SVTB, Nickelodeon (with a 32% penetration) is a go-to for animated series including *SpongeBob SquarePants*, *The Penguins of Madagascar* and *The Fairly OddParents*. Likewise, Swedish kids also catch international series like *Pair of Kings*, *Phineas and Ferb* and *The Suite Life on Deck* on Disney XD, which has a 4.6% market share of kids three to 14.

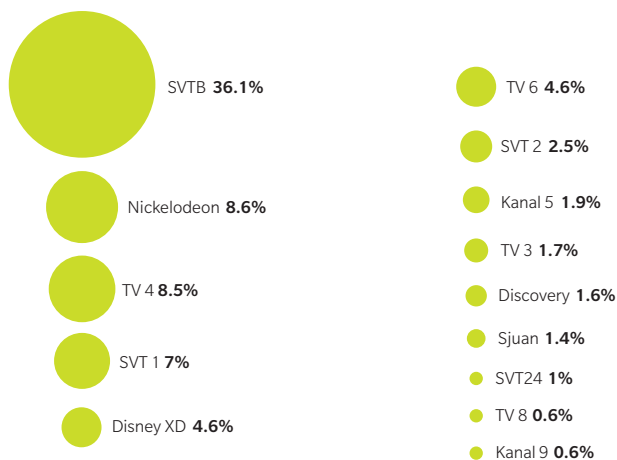
Among Sweden's generalist channels, only two have children's blocks. TV4, which almost ties Nickelodeon with an 8.5% share, airs children's programming on weekend mornings from 6 a.m. to 8 a.m. The block's best-performing shows from July to December last year were *Doktor Mugg* (23,500 kids/16.5% share), followed by *Jonson & Pipen* and *Tobbes Trix*.

SVT2 has also dedicated a small part of its schedule to kids programming on weekend mornings and offers international acquisitions. Its best-performing show over the second half of 2011 was *Disney Dogs* (15,400 kids/6.9% share), followed by *The Mickey Mouse Club* and *Hurray for Huckle!*

Beating SVT2 in market share among children three to 14, however, is generalist free-to-air channel SVT1. Karsenty explains that the reason for its 7% market share with this demo is due to an annual Christmas Eve transmission of the 1958 Donald Duck-themed holiday special, *From All of Us to All of You*, which drew 620,100 kid viewers for an impressive 98.5% share on December 24, 2011.

—Kate Calder

Market share Children 3 to 14



Eurodata TV Worldwide is a French company specializing in TV audience ratings research and market intelligence that offers TV data as well as expertise and insight into the performance of TV shows in more than 90 countries. Ratings information is provided directly by research institutes in each country, which, like Eurodata's parent company Médiamétrie, measure daily television audience ratings. For more information, contact sales manager Jacques Balducci (jbalducci@eurodatatv.com, 33-1-4758-9434).

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Annoying Orange



It's easy to see why the TV premiere of *Annoying Orange* on Cartoon Network US in June increased the channel's ratings for its timeslot by double digits—pulling in shares between 27% and 57% across key kids demos. The wise-cracking citrus from L.A.'s The Collective already had a massive audience. Since debuting in October 2009, the original web series has scored more than a billion views and brought in upwards of 2.3 million YouTube subscribers, to make its channel rank 9th overall in the online video hub's universe.

On-air



A new TV series and YouTube channel work hand-in-hand to traverse the globe

Building buzz “The challenge was to expand and create a world that was different than the web show, but also not to compromise the character,” says EP Gary Binkow, who along with creator Dane Boedigheimer and EP Dan Weinstein, hired Emmy-award winning scribe Tom Sheppard (*Pinky and the Brain*, *Animaniacs*) to write the series. The team stayed true to the style and tone of the webisodes, but fleshed out the concept so that the fruit now live on a time-traveling cart in a grocery store and go on wild adventures with night manager and mad scientist, Neville, played by YouTube star Toby Turner.

The Collective also mined its online audience, soliciting responses from fans to find out which characters were resonating more. For example, Marshmallow (who's actually a marshmallow) has proven so popular online that several storylines were developed specifically around him.

Maintaining web presence “Other networks that wanted the show wouldn't allow us to keep the online audience and didn't understand the value of keeping that going,” says Binkow. The web series, which airs Fridays online, uses YouTube, Twitter and Facebook to promote the Monday long-form broadcast on CN with sneak-peeks.

“Typically networks want that all on lockdown and don't want anyone else to be controlling the message, but [Cartoon Network] has been cooperative and values what we're doing,” says Binkow.

“If this was a property with 100,000 views and 50,000 Facebook fans, I don't think that would be the case,” adds Reza Izad, a Collective partner. “But this is a hyper-engaged property with 10 million Facebook fans and 60 million video streams a month, globally. You're dealing with a property that has real marketing muscle in and of itself,” he adds.

The original voice actors from the web series are also helping promote the show through YouTube's grassroots community. What's more, casting Toby Turner to play Neville tapped into the actor's three million subscribers across three YouTube channels.

Digital driver “The concept that digital can drive as much value proposition to a consumer as the shock-and-awe of television is relatively new to the market,” says Binkow. He says *Angry Birds*' recent licensing and merchandising success paved the way for *Annoying Orange* to launch in the US with major retailers and 15 to 20 licensees across categories.

Next moves The Collective is now working on globalizing its online content by introducing the characters in local languages through YouTube and Facebook by the end of the year. In the meantime, the TV series is set to roll out next in Australia with an unannounced free-to-air broadcaster. T-shirts and toys are ready for retail shelves Down Under. At press time, the studio was also working out a strategy for worldwide TV sales and is considering hiring a dedicated global TV sales exec to rep the IP across territories. —Kate Calder



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Hasbro has
harnessed the
rabid fanbase for
My Little Pony
to create new
t-shirt designs

Everyone's a winner

**IP owners turn to contests
to push user-generated
designs into real-world
consumer products**

BY GARY RUSAK

Since the early days of wheezing modems and Netscape, the ease with which consumers can manipulate their favorite properties and create their own goods has accelerated. As the market has matured, brand owners have learned through trial and error how best to harness the creative energies of their IP's fanbase. There are many factors to be considered when you enter the world of user-generated content, especially when dealing with licensed consumer products. Throughout 2012, toyco Hasbro has approached the UGC space with a carefully conceived strategy that has paid off in brand building and sell-through at retail. As well, two smaller players have also entered the UGC arena with a similar approach. Let's take a look at how companies big and small are navigating the space.

"When a consumer takes the lead and wants to get involved with a brand, how you have that conversation is very important," says Bryony Bouyer, SVP of global franchise development at Hasbro.

The Pawtucket, Rhode Island-based company was faced with the question of how best to engage with rabid and creative fans the moment the most recent TV iteration of its iconic My Little Pony brand went to air in October 2010. *My Little Pony Friendship is Magic* sparked a renewed fervor for the property from a demographic far beyond its core girls six to 11 target.

In order to build upon this momentum, Hasbro and softgoods partner Mighty Fine set up a t-shirt design contest in July 2011, as a test to see if the audience was ready to put its creative powers to good use.

"[Mighty Fine's] site crashed," says Bouyer, describing the immediate and overwhelming reaction of the My Little Pony fans. "So, we had another contest, and by our third one we generated over a million votes."

The mechanics of the contest illustrate the level of engagement Hasbro is trying to cultivate. First, the company put a poll on the My Little Pony Facebook page that asked fans to choose which character they would like to see on a T-shirt. Fans narrowed the field down to Twilight Sparkle, Fluttershy and Rainbow Dash!, and Hasbro and Mighty Fine then set up three separate contests in which fans were asked to submit t-shirt designs featuring one of the three most-popular Ponies. The winners were determined by fan votes and received a US\$500 prize. More importantly, Mighty Fine started selling items featuring the winning designs on its website. A subsequent contest ended up pitting the three winners against each other, and the winner of that showdown got a US\$3,000 cash prize. Mighty Fine has held similar contests with a host of other IP including Cartoon Network's Adventure Time and Star Trek (CBS).

In an effort to further explore the UCG space, My Little Pony has also turned to the art world. My Little Pony Art Project gallery showings were hosted in a series of pop-up shops located in an L.A.-based art gallery in May, featuring celebrity/artists like Perez Hilton and Ana Bagayan designing 16-inch My Little Pony dolls that were later auctioned off for charity. Additionally, the gallery offered Mighty Fine contest-winning apparel for sale alongside a host of other merchandise. The program was so well-received that another L.A.-based gallery show/pop-up shop is set to launch in October, and there are plans to continue the program in other cities next year.

Fashion forward

Stockholm, Sweden-based Stardoll has built a reputation in the user-generated space, becoming one of the world's largest online communities for teen and tween girls—it now has more than 100 million registered users worldwide. Launched in 2006, the site offers different networks including Stardoll.com, which features an online world where members can purchase virtual accessories and fashion items for their avatars and suites, and then interact with other members.

"Our brand is really a platform," says Carla Masters, director of licensing at Stardoll. "It's all about the individual and how they create their suites and clothes. We wanted to take that creativity to a new level."

In February 2011, Stardoll partnered with US retailer JCPenney to launch an exclusive collection of apparel and accessories for teen and tween girls throughout the store's 300 locations.

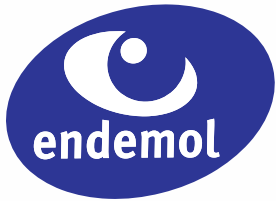
Its YouTube origins made Yo Gabba Gabba! a natural for a user-generated apparel program



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The first retail expressions were simply inspired by the user-generated content online. However, this past April, the partners decided to take the idea further. They joined forces to host a contest where users could submit their own ideas through the site, and the community itself would choose daily and weekly winners through voting.

"It was about taking their creativity to another level and bringing it to retail," says Masters. "We want to continue to do these types of contests and programs so that we can take something that is online and bring it to the real world."

Stardoll's 11-year-old contest winner was announced via a live chat on the website on August 1 and was flown to New York, where she met with a designer from licensee Five Star and worked out the final design that is now being sold at JCPenney locations.

"The girls like to deal with the people who are actually in the trenches," says Masters. "They want to deal directly with a designer and ask real questions and get real answers."

Inherent connection

Drawing out the creativity and inspiration from the community around a brand using a contest is a core tenet of both the Stardoll and Hasbro approaches. The same can be said for San Francisco, California-based Wildbrain, whose Yo Gabba Gabba IP began its ascent through a popular YouTube video that amassed millions of hits.

"With the initial music video, people took it and other content and made their own edits and remixes," says Michael Polis, president of Wildbrain Entertainment. "So user-generated has really always been a part of the experience. You have tech-savvy young adults and kids in households who love Gabba and they have played and engaged with the property from the beginning."

As with the My Little Pony program, Wildbrain apparel partner Mighty Fine is again the conduit for transforming fan enthusiasm into actual consumer products.


Through the manufacturer's Ilovefine website, a contest has been set up where a top design will be awarded a cash prize. (At press time, the dollar value had not been decided, but similar contests offer up to US\$2,500 for a winning design.) The designs will be voted upon by a special guest judge—in Yo Gabba Gabba's case, one of its lead characters, Brobee—with all of the winning designs eventually being made available for sale on the site. The contest launches this month and is set to run for three months.

"This is a different method of participation than something like Café Press [the design on-demand retailer with which Wildbrain also has a deal]," says Polis. "That is about customization, but this has a different creativity about it."

"Our brand is really a platform. It's all about the individual and how they create their suites. We wanted to take that creativity to a new level."

—Carla Masters, Stardoll

Inherent in the contest format are the controls and restrictions that IP owners need to keep their brands from being damaged by overzealous fan designers. Winning designs have to be chosen and a stipulation on each contest calls for the licensor to approve all winners before they are made available at retail.

"You don't want to come across as the mean property rights holder, but we need to guard against damaging our brand," says Polis. "That is our challenge." The upside, he adds, can be worth the strict gate-keeping. "We will get designs that are so out there, and that is a good thing." 

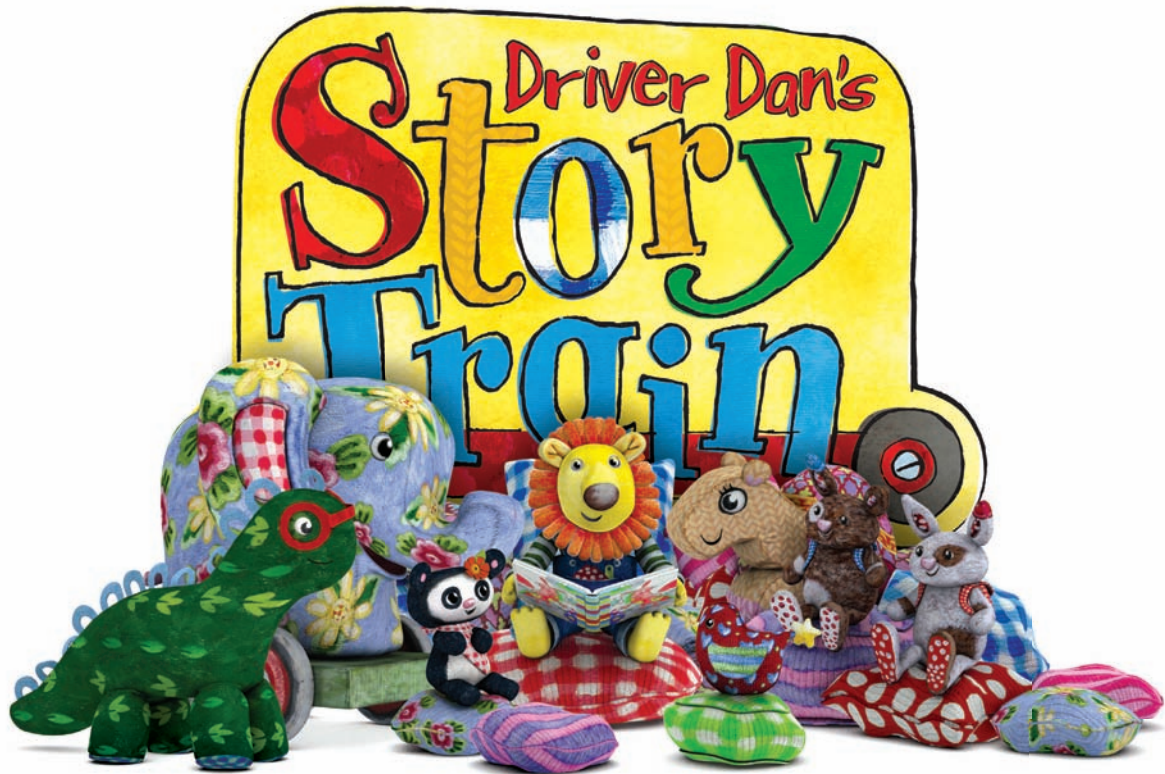


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Fox launches Chinese e-commerce Hub



Fox has scored a dedicated page for Ice Age on China's largest retail site, TMALL.com

Cracking the notoriously tricky Chinese licensing market is one thing, but getting a foot in the door of the nation's number-one online retailer is something else eventually. Fox Consumer Products' new e-commerce division, however, has managed to navigate the snakes-and-ladders of the Chinese e-tail market. With the help of its local licensing agent, Shanghai-based Skynet, it has set up an online shop dedicated to tentpole children's IP Ice Age.

"We wanted to bring Ice Age to Chinese consumers on an established platform," says Morgan Chess, VP of digital strategy and commerce for Fox Consumer Products, referring to TMALL.com, the top business-to-consumer online retailer of licensed goods in China. The site currently features more than 70,000 international and Chinese brands from more than 50 vendors, and has a customer base of approximately 180 million. (TMALL.com also ranked number-one among

all Chinese B2C retail websites for 2010, reportedly generating more than US\$500 million in revenue that year.)

"Ice Age was a good first test because we know that the movies resonate well with Chinese consumers," says Chess.

In fact, when the fourth Ice Age title opened in China in July, it broke the country's weekend box-office record for animated features, earning US\$21 million in its first three days of release.

The specialized shop features 90 SKUs from a handful of licensees covering plush, thermos and apparel for kids and adults.

"We are always updating and revising the store," says Chess. "One of the major challenges, however, is dealing with pirated products in the marketplace."

One strategy to cope with this problem is to treat the studio itself as a brand. For example, the 20th Century Fox logo is placed at the forefront of all advertisements. This type of marketing reinforces the legitimacy of the film's associated products. "It's different than in the US," says Chess. "Here, people don't really take note of what studio a film comes from."

Another promotional innovation has been a partnership with the studio's theatrical counterparts to place QR codes on all outdoor advertising that link directly to the e-commerce site.

"We have very high expectations for this shop," says Chess. "It is definitely breaking new ground, and we hope that it will have a permanent place."

The new dedicated web page is part of a series of local revamps for Foxshop.com. Similar models will roll out in the UK by Christmas, followed by additional European territories into next year. —Gary Rusak





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A Barbie-centric fashion show kicked off Mattel's inaugural Global Summit

Going global

Mattel brings international licensing partners under one roof to hold its first-ever worldwide licensing summit

Keeping close tabs on a number of extensive licensing programs that span the globe is no easy task. One way to keep the lines of communication open is by bringing a brand's entire licensing community together in one place at one time. To say that such an gathering is logistically ambitious is putting it mildly, but that's what toyco Mattel did with its first-ever Global Summit earlier this year.

"We brought together our licensees from around the globe to immerse them in the Mattel brands portfolio, as well as to connect and collaborate with one another," says Rosa Zeegers, SVP of Mattel Global Consumer Products Licensing. "As a result of our Global Summit, conversations are now underway on several hundred new deals for Mattel."

The private event at the Fountainbleau Hotel in Miami, Florida was not open to members of the press. And its stated goal was to bring together licensees from all over the world to reiterate brand messages, keep product presentation consistent throughout different territories, and possibly foster cross-market collaborations.

"We wanted all the markets to hear one voice," says Margaux Vega, a Mattel spokesperson. "It was the first time we brought together all our global partners from a licensing perspective."

There were a total of 700 participants, including more than 600 licensees from 45 countries representing 30-plus categories.

The event focused on Mattel's key properties—Barbie, Hot Wheels, Fisher-Price and Monster High. It kicked off with an evening gala featuring celeb guests from the world of racing (Mario Andretti and Danica Patrick), followed by a Barbie-themed fashion show in which more than 40 models sported licensed attire from the property's new apparel line.

The following day there was a licensee showcase in which partners set up booths and co-mingled, taking note of how the properties were used in different categories. In fact, the cross-pollination angle was a driving force behind the event.

"It gave our partners an opportunity to see what other companies were doing and maybe pair up across categories," says Vega. "So maybe a pencil company and a backpack company could get together to come up with a different package."

As beneficial as the licensees might have found the summit, Vega says Mattel benefited from seeing how its cornerstone brands were being developed around the world. "The brands were really excited to see how each of the partners were building on initial concepts and directions and taking them to new places," she says.

Although it was rated a success by the company, there are no concrete plans to make the Global Summit an annual event. However, Mattel sources say that another such gathering at some point in the future is likely. —Gary Rusak



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Ready or not, here they come

FYI brand owners: A new study finds kids' influence on household expenditures continues to rise

While most social networking sites prohibit members under the age of 13, more than half of kids between six and 12 have at least one page on popular sites (and Facebook accounts for 94% of this activity). But it's not like parents would be shocked. According to a recent study, more than 78% of parents are "friends" or "contacts" with their children on adult-targeted social networking sites. This revelation was just one of the findings revealed at "Today's Families: Growing Up in a World of Multimedia Messaging," a panel discussion that was held in New York last month.

"The role of kids in society has changed," says panel moderator Donna Sabino, SVP of Kids & Family Insights at Ipsos MediaCT. "The way that parents parent has changed, and so has the technological ecosystem."

Sabino drew her insights from recent research conducted by Ipsos LMX Family, including an online survey that monitored the behaviour of kids from 2,700 US families (700 with preschoolers zero to five, 2,000 with kids six to 12) in daily half-hour chunks.

What emerged from the study was a picture of a dynamic demographic that is increasingly influential across the board.

"Kids are having an impact on most of the expenditures in a household," she says. "This is the reality for kids growing up today. My message to brand owners is, 'Ready or not here they come.'"

In terms of concrete numbers, Sabino says it's easy to track kids' purchasing power and influence in the US\$1.1-trillion US family-spend market by looking at tablet sales, for example.

"Kids drive technology acquisition," she says. "When it comes to iPad purchases, we see that 21% of households with kids six to 12 have iPads. In households without kids, it's only 8%. As well, 18% of households with kids intend to buy an iPad this year compared to only 7% of households without."

However, Sabino says that kids' influence is not characterized by spoiled children whining for something until their parents give in and buy it. Rather, it is the result of an emerging respect for kids and their understanding of technology.

"The concept of 'pester power' is outdated at this point," says Sabino. "The fact is that kids are being actively invited to [help make] family decisions. Parents want their kids to make suggestions, especially with technology."

This assertion is also supported by numbers that suggest a new, more enlightened relationship between parents and their children is emerging. According to the study, six out of 10 parents believe their kids are smarter than they were at the same age because of their offsprings' aptitude with media and technology, and seven out of 10 of parents want to spend more time with their children than their parents spent with them.

"Parents are more open to different sources of information now," she says. "They want kids to bring their thoughts to the table." —Gary Rusak

**"The role of
kids in society
has changed.
The way that
parents parent
has changed,
and so has the
technological
ecosystem."**

—Donna Sabino,
Kids & Family Insights, Ipsos MediaCT



Above and beyond

**Discount
tween-
targeted
retailer Five
Below is a hot
stock with
soaring sales
potential**

While much attention was paid to Facebook's disappointing IPO in May, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania-based kid-friendly discount retailer Five Below might just have been the stock pick of the summer. At its offering on July 19, share prices jumped more than 50%. At press time, the stock has nearly doubled its initial per-share valuation of US\$17.

The hot discount retailer, which pledges to keep every item in the store under US\$5, was founded in 2002 by former Zany Brain principals David Schlessinger and Tom Velios, and has been enjoying eye-popping growth ever since.

"It is likely to grow into a multi-billion-dollar company relatively shortly," says Lutz Muller, founder and president of Klosters Trading Corporation, a retail consulting firm based in Williston Hills, Vermont. "It is going to be a national factor in the next five years."

Currently, the chain is focused on the US Northeast and Midwest, with a distribution center in Delaware. There are approximately 205 locations, each around 7,500 square feet in size and primarily located in strip malls across 17 states. A new distribution center is being readied for 2013 in Tennessee, giving the chain the potential to grow and serve the Southern states.

"Five Below is currently opening about 60 locations a year," says Robert W. Carroll, research analyst for broad-line/discount retail and toys at UBS Investment Bank.

"Given how difficult it is to have square footage growth within the US retail market, that fact that Five Below is looking to grow its square footage by 20% over the next 10 years puts it in a unique position."

The positive financials are obvious even from a surface look at the retailer's revenues. In 2011, Five Below's net sales topped US\$297 million, up from US\$197 million the previous year. The company has also enjoyed 24 straight quarters of same-store growth.

This success is a result of focusing on a specific demographic, key product offerings and superb store design, according to retail experts. "It mainly targets the pre-teen and teen market," says Muller. "It does toys and is heavy into cosmetics, beauty aids and things of that nature, which it does pretty well."

While only about 20% of the chain's offerings are licensed goods, it seems to get the most bang for its buck out of them.

"In toys, you see Lego, Barbie and other Mattel items," says Carroll. "Right away when you step into a location, you see brands you recognize."

Muller says that while a significant number of licensed goods are available at Five Below, the retailer's tight price structure means that they're primarily close-out and over-stock items. "Typically you won't get the hottest stuff on the block there," he says. "But it is nice merchandise and it's usually an extremely good deal."

Perhaps what sets the retailer apart from its discount-er competition is something as fundamental as store layout. "The sightlines are clean, and the stores are bright," says Carroll. "You walk into them and you find yourself saying, 'Wow, that's just five bucks?'"

Chris Katje, a Grand Rapids, Michigan-based contributor to the stock-focused website Seeking Alpha and a freelance retail watcher, agrees that stores layout is contributing to Five Below's success. "It is set up for easy cross-promotions," he says. "I feel like they use their space really well."

Watching the success of the discount tier over the last number of years, investors are banking on Five Below's rollout strategy to continue the chain's upward momentum "It's a great format, and we are expecting great things from it, looking forward," says Carroll.

—Gary Rusak

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Hambo, one of Miniclip's most popular games, is earmarked for franchise expansion



Game on for retail

Top-rated gaming hub Miniclip makes its first play for licensing and TV worlds

Finding a virgin treasure trove of well-known IPs is a dream for anyone in the licensing business. But a new partnership forged with kids online gaming hub Miniclip.com has made the dream a reality for Dimensional Branding Group and transmedia specialist Worldwide Biggies.

"It's the best of the best," says Albie Hecht, CEO of Worldwide Biggies and former president of Nickelodeon Entertainment. The New York-based production company recently announced a deal in which it became the exclusive representative of the site's media production endeavors. "It's an incredible place for potential content," he contends.

Miniclip is the world's number-one online games platform, with more than 70 million unique game players visiting the site each month. The Neuchâtel, Switzerland-based site launched in 2000 and now has more than 800 games in its library. It also manages to keep the average user entertained for more than 40 minutes per session.

At this Licensing Show in June, San Anselmo, California-based Dimensional Branding Group announced that it would represent the game hub to leverage Miniclip's content for licensing and promotional efforts.

Larry Seidman, CEO of Dimensional Branding Group, has previously done similar work on mega app *Angry Birds* and he's similarly bullish on the potential of Miniclip.

"If you compare Miniclip to the Nickelodeon or Cartoon Network websites, it's right up there [in terms of traffic and demographic reach]," he says. "So if you are thinking about marketing on those platforms, you should also look at Miniclip."

Another attractive aspect of the site is that in an increasingly global market, a full 75% of Miniclip's users reside outside the US. "The reach of the site is extraordinary," says Hecht. "This isn't a domestic brand, it is totally global."

Worldwide Biggies is currently taking stock of Miniclip's vast library and deciding what sorts of production options would fit each IP.

"Everything is in play," says Hecht. "We have pinpointed some leading properties and will be looking into developing movies, web series and animated TV series. We just started looking into it, so there is a lot to consider."

The leading IPs out of gate, according to Hecht, will be Miniclip originals Hambo, Gravity Guy, Extreme Skater and Canyon Defence. Their related games are all among the most popular on the site, and he believes they have rich enough narrative potential to support multiplatform extensions.

Seidman has also put these properties at the top of his list, and says discussions have already started to bring them to mass retail in traditional categories such as apparel, plush and publishing. He expects the full product lineup will appeal to a wide range of demographics, including kids, before the end of the year.

"There is lots of interest," he says. "When you have a great platform that is continuing to grow—it's not surprising that people are interested." —Gary Rusak

Licensing plays larger role in Wonder Forge's fun and games

Who Founded in 2007 by former Cranium head of development Jacobe Chrisman, Seattle, Washington-based Wonder Forge has since left its mark on the board game category. The company has certainly expanded from its first licensing deal with Dr. Seuss for a Cat in the Hat game that found its way onto Toys 'R' Us shelves and is still selling five years later.

"From there we have grown every year," says Kimberly Pierce, VP of marketing communications. "We are taking on new licenses and now have about 60 products across all tiers of retail."

The company has dozens of licensing partnerships, with an emphasis on preschool IP including Disney Princess, Jake and the NeverLand Pirates, Super Friends from Warner Bros., Richard Scary, Curious George and Chuggington.

"Licensing is playing a bigger role than ever in kids products," says Pierce, adding that roughly 75% of Wonder Forge's business comes from licensed products. In June, the privately held company raised US \$1.75 million from investors to support a projected 86% domestic growth and 49% international growth this year.

What: The core success of Wonder Forge's games can be attributed to how it explores a brand's attributes in new ways for the category. "We have tried to innovate to bring the brands to life," says Pierce. "With the Seuss game we tried to bring a lot of whimsy to the game because that is what the books suggested."

The Seuss title, for example, includes activities like juggling and shimmying — physical tasks not often associated with the board game category.

"For Disney Princess we wanted to create a game that celebrated the desire to be a princess," she continues. "We don't just slap a license onto one of our existing games."

Latest Innovation: One of Wonder Forge's priority products set to launch this fall at mass and specialty US retailers is The Joker Funhouse (US\$19.99), stemming from the Super Friends license. The board game is aimed at kids four and up and includes a variety of activities and props, including a rolling ball, secret messages and a Batarang. Also this fall, Wonder Forge is expanding its retail distribution significantly. US department store chain Kohl's, mass retailers K-mart and Sam's Club, and online retailer the Gilt Group will be carrying Wonder Forge products.

Pierce says the company has been pleased with the growing lists of retailers that have made shelf space for the innovative games. "We have attracted their attention because our games are so well-designed," she says.

The company will also launch into the app space this year with Dr. Seuss Fun Machine App Play Game.

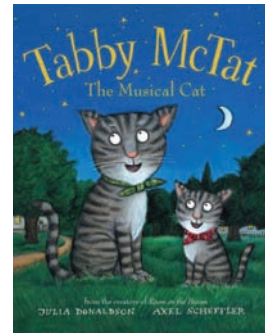
What's Next: The game maker is always interested in adding to its license roster and is specifically looking at further expansion in the preschool space. "We are looking for evergreen brands, those that are going to stand the test of time," says Pierce. "Of course, we are still open to brands that might be more up-and-coming, too." Potential partners can expect Wonder Forge to deliver a unique product and be proactive in terms of marketing and promotion with its retail partners.

Contact Joel Berman, head of global business development and licensing (joel@wonderforge.com)

—Gary Rusak



Board game maker Wonder Forge is expanding into the digital space with its upcoming Dr. Seuss Fun Machine app-compatible game



BookBet

Tabby McTat, The Musical Cat

From Scottish author Julia Donaldson, the award-winning scribe behind of *The Gruffalo* and *Stick Man*, comes *Tabby McTat, The Musical Cat*. Scheduled to hit retail in December, this picture book with illustrations from Axel Scheffler tells the amusing tale of what happens when Tabby, who has a penchant for singing and collecting coins, gets out on his own. The subtle rhyme and rhythm of the title should give readers a peek into the playful prose Donaldson has built her reputation on. Published by Scholastic imprint Arthur A. Levine Books, the lushly illustrated hard cover is aimed at kids ages four to eight and will retail for US\$16.99. —Gary Rusak

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Digital Tech Frontier
wants to bring its
Augmented Reality
to the masses

Before your eyes

Augmented reality packaging sets sights
on invading US mass-market retail shelves

Scott Jochim, CEO and founder of Tempe, Arizona-based Digital Tech Frontier, wants to fundamentally change retail environments with his company's patented Augmented Reality technology.

"We broke the code and now the technology can work across any platform," he says, describing a computer algorithm that can be recognized by all smart devices to create an augmented reality effect. "When a device recognizes a pattern, it will instantly transform the screen into an interactive experience."

Jochim says that the applications for the technology are extensive. For example, it can be embedded in packaging to give consumers a sneak-preview of a product. "Right now the packages just sit at retail," he notes. "But imagine if you could point your iPhone or Android at a Hot Wheels package and then you can see the cars themselves racing around a big virtual track with flames pouring out of them on your phone's screen."

Additionally, the technology can be used to augment in-store promotions. "You can have something like a dinosaur footprint on the floor, and when you point your phone at it and download an app, a Tyrannosaurus Rex appears and maybe rambles through the store pointing to the shelf of toys that the retailer is promoting."

Believing the technology is a way to bolster the in-store experience, Jochim contends it will give bricks-and-mortar retailers a new weapon in their battle against growing e-commerce portals. "Why go to a Toys 'R' Us rather than shop online," he asks? "This way, you go to the store because of all the added value. You can see how the toys are used; you can even have an entertainment experience. At this point, if a package doesn't have some sort of play value in and of itself, I think manufacturers are really missing out."

While the technology is suited to any number of consumer products, he says his company is focusing on the kids area and has deals with flash card and puzzle manufacturers pending.

Currently, Digital Tech Frontier is also working on an augmented reality campaign to "elf-a-size" independent South Carolina retailer Wonder Works for the upcoming Christmas season. While details are still under wraps, Jochim says the technology will "make Christmas come alive" at the retailer's four locations.

A small AR campaign can get off the ground for about US\$16,000, estimates Jochim. However, Digital Tech Frontier offers a host of models for potential partners. "Retailers are going to be very happy with this," he adds. —Gary Rusak

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The gaming generation

BY ERIN MILLER

**Nickelodeon
hones in
on gaming
trends for
teens**

In our previous edition of Kaleidoscope, we took you on the journey of the Millennial gamer—what defines them, motivates them and drives them. With that in mind, part two of our study, led by Nick Digital Consumer Insights in partnership with Smarty Pants, shifts the spotlight to the younger end of Millennial teens. We've honed in on kids ages 12 to 17 to explore their habits, attitudes and preferences when it comes to all things gaming.

Compared to adults, teens have a broader definition of gaming, thanks to their varied entry points into the category. Portable and online are heavy platform hitters for teens, whereas older age groups are likely to define gaming by console usage. Thus, teens are more passionate about gaming in all of its forms. But despite teens' heavy use of mobile, social and online gaming, game consumption that takes place on traditional consoles far outweighs that of older Millennials, especially among teen boys who are still very attached to their consoles.

When taking a look at social, mobile and online gaming, nearly two-thirds of teens are gaming on Facebook and/or mobile devices, with mobile play taking place as frequently as it does online. Teen girls game more often than boys on mobile or Facebook, while boys continue to dominate console play. In looking at the types of games boys and girls are attracted to, teen boys enjoy fast-paced action and excitement, while girls prefer calmer pet and verbal games. This stands true across all platforms. On mobile devices, all teens love physics games, with 36% of both boys and girls calling out *Angry Birds* a favorite. Both sexes also frequent arcade games like *Fruit Ninja*, and girls showed an increased interest in music games like *Tap Tap Revenge*.

While teens' game preferences on mobile and social platforms were almost evenly matched, online gaming preferences proved to be drastically different for boys and girls. Girls are drawn to virtual worlds like *Second Life* and trivia/brain games like *FunTrivia.com*, while boys are drawn

more exclusively to racing, sports, war, and other high-action games. Teen boys listed racing, sports, war, action and fighting games as the five types of games they play most frequently online. In contrast, girls listed puzzle, pet, word, virtual worlds and trivia/brain games.

Teens are willing to spend and spread the word on games. The behavior also shows they'll willingly spend their discretionary income on games and spend more per month on gaming than older Millennials. The biggest slice of the pie when it comes to spending, goes to online games, with 12- to 17-year-olds spending an average of US\$9 per month on them, versus US\$6.50 per month on social games and US\$7 per month on mobile. Roughly one-third of teens pay for game upgrades, with mobile games seeing the biggest spend (42% pay for upgrades), likely due to upgrades from "lite" to "full" game versions.

Friends have long played a key role as influencers when it comes to entertainment and media categories, and gaming easily falls into this realm as a central topic of conversation for teens—they are far more likely to hear about new games from friends than older Millennials are. On the flip side, they're less likely to hear about games from ads or the Apple App Store. Teens count on their friends for information about new games and happily spread the word, in return, for games they're passionate about. **k**

This concludes our report on Millennials and gaming. Next month's Kaleidoscope will take a look at kids' views on this year's upcoming presidential election.

For more information, contact Kaleidoscope@nick.com

(Source: Nick Digital Consumer Insights Research in partnership with Smarty Pants. Qualitative sample size: N=66 respondents; Quant sample size: N=2,444)

A major focus of the Brand and Consumer Insights Department at Nickelodeon Kids & Family is to live and breathe kid culture. We continually track and identify trends, and explore what it means to be a kid and teen today. In an effort to keep you in touch with our audience and give a voice to our consumer, we've created the Nickelodeon Kaleidoscope. Every month, Kaleidoscope will capture key areas of interest across the kid and family cultural landscape, provide an understanding of attitudes and behaviors, and report on trends and buzz.

The “super power” of kryptonite

A 14-year-old boy finds inspiration in his real-life heroes



Fellyx, a 14-year-old from Rhode Island, doesn't admire LeBron James for his NBA championship or Nike endorsement deal. According to Fellyx, “I look up to LeBron because of what he's been through as a kid without a father.”

Like LeBron, Fellyx has grown into a young man without his father playing a prominent role in his life. While his very present older siblings have served as positive models for Fellyx, his longing for a father figure has tugged on him emotionally over the years, and its weight has become heavier the older he's become. LeBron's story is both comforting and inspiring to Fellyx, a teen navigating his sometimes unstable world. “Yeah, knowing LeBron has been through a lot as a child and is now successful makes him more interesting,” he says, “because I'm still going through hell as a child, trying to succeed in my adulthood and become a hero to someone else.”



Fellyx isn't bothered by LeBron's missteps in life—he was taught from a young age that nobody's perfect. Even though he looks up to LeBron as a role model, he doesn't expect him to be flawless. “I know sometimes LeBron has a bad attitude, but he deserves where he's at. He works really hard and has a God-given talent.”

Having a hero is important no matter what age you are. As kids grow into teens, their heroes go from fictional and fantastical to real and relatable. And every superhero has a kryptonite, but for older kids, kryptonite seems like an essential complement to the superpowers. Teens still want to engage with someone aspirational, but knowing that the person has experienced obstacles or is vulnerable is essential in keeping them connected to the person or story. While Fellyx may choose another path beyond basketball, LeBron's story has given him hope that he too can rise above his life's challenges. —Tiffany Aguilar



Insight Kids is a research and strategic consulting company dedicated to catalyzing our clients to build innovative, impactful and inspiring experiences for kids and families. To be further inspired by Fellyx and Insight Kids, visit www.insightstrategygroup.com/insightkids/.

Cool or Not? The virtual community edition

	Boys 8 to 11 (74)	Girls 8 to 11 (38)	Boys 12 to 15 (101)	Girls 12 to 15 (60)		Boys 8 to 11 (60)	Girls 8 to 11 (42)	Boys 12 to 15 (75)	Girls 12 to 15 (58)
	33.8%	34.2%	26.7%	21.7%	Totally way cool *	23.3%	16.7%	22.7%	17.2%
	18.9%	18.4%	22.8%	13.3%	Very cool *	10%	21.4%	9.3%	5.2%
	13.5%	23.7%	27.7%	18.3%	Kinda cool *	28.3%	33.3%	33.3%	27.6%
	4.1%	13.2%	9.9%	30%	Not cool *	18.3%	19%	18.7%	32.8%
	29.7%	10.5%	12.9%	16.7%	Totally un-cool *	20%	9.5%	16%	17.2%
Kongregate.com	71.3%	85.2%	60.7%	76.8%	Don't know what it is	76.5%	83.6%	70.5%	77.6%
									

* Excludes “Don't know what it is” responses



Cool or Not? is part of KidSay's July/Aug 2012 Trend Tracker. These one-of-a-kind research reports are published 10 times a year and provide a quantitative and qualitative picture of kids' likes, dislikes and trends gathered through in-school surveys with US kids ages five to 15. Contact Bob Reynolds (913-390-8110 or bob@kidsay.com).

Have you connected with these new kids buyers yet?



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New-school preschool

BY KATE CALDER



MIPJR

Disney Junior's *Doc McStuffins* focuses on narrative-driven storytelling with complex characters and a social emotional curriculum

A subtle shift has been taking place over the last year or so in the preschool space. Largely driven by the entrée of Disney Junior, broadcasters are on the lookout for narrative-driven shows as an alternative to the *Dora* school of interactivity. And looming over the new trend in storytelling is an ever-challenging funding model that ups the pressure for a series to have toyetic appeal.

Veteran kids series writer Chris Nee (*Blues Clues*, *Ni Hao, Kai-Lan*, *The Wonder Pets*) says that the idea for Disney Junior hit series *Doc McStuffins* came to her as she tried to figure out how to help her son, who suffers from asthma. The series about a six-year-old girl who runs and operates a clinic for broken toys and worn-out stuffed animals is primarily intended to dispel kids' anxieties about going to the doctor. It was also a chance for Nee to test out theories on what she really wanted to do in preschool television—and that is return to strong character-driven storytelling. In particular, she wanted to tell stories that weren't interrupted by continual viewer prompts to interact with on-screen characters. The series debuted with the launch of the new 24-hour Disney Junior channel this past March.

"I kept waiting for them to say, 'Okay, now you have to put in an interactive element,'" says Nee. But Disney gave her the freedom to make the story central to each episode. She also pushed the envelope with the addition of complex characters such as Chilly, a hypochondriac. Nee expected the anxiety-ridden sidekick might prove too much for the network's taste, but instead she was encouraged to go with the comic momentum of the character. "We found that kids responded well to Chilly, which bears out what I had hoped—kids are drawn to the extremes of humanity and aren't pushed away by imperfect characters in a show," she says.

Nee also designed the show to work on a high-repeat schedule and built clever stories that reveal more details every time kids watch a particular episode. "It's okay to let them have things they will grow into," says Nee. "It's okay to laugh or be moved by things that they don't 100% understand at the moment." She points to highly developed and iconic *Sesame Street* characters like Cookie Monster that had kids laughing the moment they appeared on-screen well before young viewers even got to the joke.

A return to storytelling Joe D'Ambrosia, VP of original programming at Disney Junior, says interaction built into preschool series is now a bit softer on numeracy and literacy. He jokes that preschool TV has started to feel like you are watching a game show where kids were encouraged to get up and shout at the TV. But now, he



Headed to Disney Junior, *The Happy Hugglemonsters* focuses on emotional learning through a main character that has a strong—even skeptical—sense of humor

says, parents want shows that help their kids become emotionally strong and ready to face the playground on their first day alone at school.

Interactive numeracy and literacy components that were so ubiquitous in the last decade haven't disappeared, altogether D'Ambrosia explains; they've just migrated to other more suitably interactive screens. "They can get that learning-based content on apps and mobile devices, so TV has, for Disney, gone back to its roots with storytelling," he says.

Bridging curriculum Halle Stanford, EVP of children's entertainment at The Jim Henson Company, says its series *Pajanimals* has a touch of interactive in that one of the characters acknowledges kids at home with a "hello." But then the episode's emotional story and journey plays out via the series' dreamland. And at the very end of each ep, one of the dreamland characters looks at the camera and explains the message of the day directly to kids.

Other Henson shows like *Dinosaur Train* and *Sid the Science Kid*, which have fairly strong science and history curricula, also focus squarely on storytelling and characters for TV. Both series have interactive online content with call-to-action learning. "We don't have to get every single curriculum point across in our episode; we can actually deliver a lot of that on the website," says Stanford. "It frees all of us up as producers to create whatever experience we want," she adds.

Historically, locally produced preschool programming evolved differently around the world, which may account for varying approaches to curriculum, country to country. The BBC's first children's block, *Watch With Mother*, was designed as a safe and trustworthy place for kids to watch television. Programming that originally flowed out of the US had an educational bent that harkened back to *Sesame Street* and *Mr. Rogers* with a lot of social-emotional content. But the shows were rooted in preparing kids for kindergarten by engendering numeracy and literacy skills, in particular kids from low-income homes that couldn't afford preschool.



Pajanimals, produced by The Jim Henson Company, mixes a small dose of interactivity and academic curriculum with a strong focus on characters and storytelling

Veteran preschool creator Josh Selig says the series his New York-based prodco Little Airplane makes, such as *Small Potatoes*, lean towards strong character development and a soft curriculum that sells well in the US, as well as internationally. “It’s really only when we’re in North America that people drill down into curriculum and ask how these elements will be woven into the script. When we pitch the same shows throughout Europe, there is often appreciation that there is some curriculum there, but it isn’t a big concern,” he says.

Real characters for real kids For her part, Nee says she strayed from the oft-repeated rule that preschool shows should aim to have only one emotional note. “What I see is that kids are incredibly imperfect beings,” she argues. “I always say kids are like opera singers, everything is on a heightened level,” she says, adding that children go from laughing hysterically, to crying, to a temper tantrum, to laughing hysterically again in the span of 10 minutes. So Nee has created multi-dimensional, imperfect characters to resonate with these preschoolers. “It’s powerful to see yourself reflected on television,” she says and adds that emotionally, a lot of preschool characters on screen aren’t truly reflecting kids at this young age. “I think it’s more complicated and I’m trying to reflect that,” says Nee.

Nee has also built a level of sophistication into the scripts that speaks to parents as well. To begin with, the *Doc McStuffins* music and celebrity voices draw parents in and engage them. “We also know that the family being African American and the dad being a stay-at-home parent are small twists that are also resonating for adults,” she says.

This broad emotional spectrum is reflected in *The Happy Hugglemonsters*, currently in production for Disney Junior. Co-produced by UK-based Walker Productions and Ireland’s Brown Bag Films, the series is based on a book about a family of monsters.

“From one episode to the next, they could be exuberant, they could be angry, they could be sad or they could be happy, but they always remain a loving family,” says Beth Gardiner, VP of production and development at Disney Junior EMEA. She adds that some of the storylines, which are solely about learning to get along and share, are augmented by covering things that preschoolers struggle with like listening and respecting other people’s opinions.

“Nancy Kanter, head of Disney Junior,...encouraged us to really push the humor in the character of Henry and represent a real little kid,” says Gardiner. She explains that like other preschool shows, *Hugglemonsters* highlights emotions, but what really sets it apart is its tone. It’s main character Henry Hugglemonster speaks directly to modern kids, who Gardiner says may consume and comment on more media than adults. And are more sophisticated than ever in their joke-telling. “Henry is a wise kid; he has seen some things in his five years, so he can be skeptical, he can look into the camera and be like, ‘Can you believe this guy?’”



Presenting a toyetic train episode helped Little Airplane secure financing for its social-emotional series *Small Potatoes*

Gardiner says the episode ideas were tested using a storymatics process in which kids were shown pictures on-screen along with narration to make sure they understood the social-emotional lessons that are laid out in the stories. “These are things that preschoolers struggle with—listening and respecting other people’s opinions. And these are things we hear from parents are social skills that kids need to learn,” says Gardiner.

Extending the age reach A social-emotional curriculum with an edge of witty humor also works across a broader age group, another factor that is redefining the preschool demo.

“We are programming for ages two to seven,” says Disney’s D’Ambrosia. “We like to call it preschool plus.” He says that the broad age range acts as an umbrella between *Mickey Mouse Clubhouse* and the tween market. Disney, in fact, is specifically developing shows meant to capture a slightly older age target, such as *Seven D*, a new comic re-imaging of the Seven Dwarves before they meet Snow White. D’Ambrosia says the series will appeal to preschoolers’ older siblings, as well as Mom and Dad.

In the UK, Turner EMEA’s chief content creator of children’s entertainment, Michael Carrington, who oversees preschool net Cartoonito, says the age range for preschool has broadened enough to fragment into two groups—two to three-year-olds and four- to six-year-olds.

“Even though six-year-olds are at the age of primary school, they are still considered the cusp. They are still learning, so they are the top end of preschool,” says



Cartoonito is expanding *Cartoonito Tales*, which incorporates live-action storytelling beyond the original UK audience for its channels across Europe

Carrington. Cartoonito, he says, tends to skew to the upper end of preschool, while being careful not to alienate younger kids. "We find that if we stick to the five-year-old audience, we're able to introduce material that has a broad appeal and, by default, engages younger audiences," he adds.

Drama for tots Echoing Disney's recent surge of complex storytelling-led series, Carrington says preschool is now treated like any other audience group with a huge range of genres that venture outside the traditional learning remit. "We've seen a real revolution in terms of the style of programs that are presented. We've gone from traditional five-minute animation segments to half-hour narrative dramas specifically made for them," he notes. He points to CBeebies' *Grandpa in My Pocket* as a great success in creating narrative drama for little ones, and contends that Cartoonito's *LazyTown* comes close. The Turner-owned series is relaunching in 2013, to feature puppets and real people interacting with music and dance to fuel a narrative arc in each episode. And this summer, Turner Broadcasting UK greenlit the second season of its 10 x 12-minute live-action series *Cartoonito Tales*, which brings classic stories like *Thumbelina*, *Treasure Island* and *Peter Pan* to life in the real world. The series was originally produced just for the UK, and it proved so popular that it's being rolled out to Cartoonito channels across Europe.

Carrington says the appetite for narrative dramas like *Grandpa* is huge, but the cost of producing a live-action drama for the preschool space is prohibitive. "It's unlikely a commercial net would be able to invest as much, so it would likely have to be a co-production, and the funding would have to be carefully constructed."


CBeebies controller Kay Benbow, meanwhile, says the UK digital channel has three more preschool dramas in development, and she's hoping to have one on-screen for next year. "They are just like dramas for any other age group, with narrative and live-action actors shot on location to portray a story about life," says Benbow. She agrees that dramas for this age group are financially challenging, and so is finding creative solutions to produce them.

Benbow adds that the feedback from parents for social-emotional curriculum and narrative dramas has been strong. CBeebies seeks out parental suggestions on the grownups section of the channel's website, and in the last year has started engaging with parents via Facebook and Twitter, which Benbow contends has made a difference in her programming decisions.

Cash challenges Of course, funding issues aren't exclusive to the new wave of preschool dramas. Finding the means to get a full animated series off the ground has become increasingly difficult for producers in all genres, making co-productions all the more necessary, not to mention a growing reliance on creating toy-friendly characters to shore up funding.

"Whenever you're looking at a potential global franchise where budgets are high, there needs to be a financial partner on-board who believes they can recoup their investment, which is really only going to happen through potential toy sales," says Little Airplane's Selig. He says *Small Potatoes* wasn't conceived as a toy property so it required a bit of finessing to get the licensing community interested and, subsequently, get funding off the ground. Writing an episode called "Potato Train" (which for Little Airplane was a bit tongue-in-cheek), opened up the door for the creation of vehicular toys, which has helped in certain meetings.

"Without a potential promise of toys, it's hard to get anything made unless you're talking about a very modestly budgeted in-house production that can be done within one territory, which is the roots of preschool," says Selig. In fact, he surmises that maybe we'll even see a trend that mirrors days past when broadcasters commissioned shows to only air in their territory.

Turner's Carrington says he commissions shows that connect universally with a pan-European, Middle Eastern and African audience, but also has the opportunity to present local content to specific territories. In fact, it's still necessary to have some local relevance to accommodate the idiosyncrasies of each country. For example, Cartoonito has bought several locally produced evergreen series to satisfy the viewing preferences of its audience in Italy. And he adds that staying relevant in a territory like Africa means providing content that serves the territory's 26 different dialects, which each have their own cultural references. "We never want to disconnect our audiences in any way. We want to remain relevant, and if that means using local programming, that's what we'll do." 

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While not the obvious choice from a budget perspective, Ragdoll Productions felt stop motion was the only option for making *The Adventures of Abney & Teal* stand out in a crowd

Stop-motion rewind

With its costlier budgets and more labor-intensive nature, stop-motion animation has taken a backseat to CGI over the past decade. But tastes change. Recently, it seems audiences are craving stop motion's more tactile feel and rough edges—and producers are lining up to deliver.

As an animation technique, stop motion is almost as old as film itself. From late-19th-century pioneers like J. Stuart Blackton and Georges Méliès to the iconic 60s Rankin Bass productions like *Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer* (you remember Burl Ives, don't you?), the artform has entertained generations. Fast forward to the digital age and it's evident that animation has taken a turn for the slick. CGI can produce a mind-bending assortment of visuals, freeing animators and storytellers from the physical constraints and the budget-draining, meticulous work required to create high-end stop-motion productions. However, as with many fashions, the whims of the audience are fickle and apt to rebound once a style becomes entrenched or standard. With the smooth edges and high sheen of CGI animation dominating the box office and living room, there now seems to be a hunger once again for the more tactile feel and rough edges of stop motion. Consequently, the creative community is hard at work to give audiences the animation they so desire.

BY GARY RUSAK

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ParaNorman, Laika's full-length stop-motion film, hit North American theaters in August, and was well-received by consumers and critics alike

Emotional resonance “It never really went away,” says Anne Wood, founder and creative director of UK-based Ragdoll Productions. The company made its name with live-action/stop-motion hybrid *Teletubbies* and has returned fully to the stop-motion fold with preschool series *The Adventures of Abney & Teal*, currently in production on its second season.

Wood explains that companies in the UK, most notably Bristol's Aardman Animations, have kept the artform alive and relevant. For its part, Ragdoll is returning to stop motion because its style best serves the series' content and makes it stand out from numerous CGI-animated series vying for the attention of the same three- to six-year-old demo.

“It's a beautiful almost picture-book technique,” Wood says. “There is so much CG around, and it can be done so cheaply, that we were looking for something different. You can get more charm out of stop motion.”

Certainly, Arianne Sutner, a producer at Portland, Oregon-based animation house Laika, would not disagree. The studio released the stop-motion animated film *Coraline* in 2009 with Universal Pictures, and her most recent credit is as a producer on *ParaNorman*, which was released worldwide in August by Focus Features.

“It's always been around and it's always been appreciated because it's a beautiful artform,” says Sutner. “I've been working in stop motion for 23 years; I don't necessarily think the audience has an aversion to CGI, as much as stop motion is just an artform people appreciate.”

Chris Bowden, a producer at famed animation studio

Mackinnon & Saunders (*Nightmare Before Christmas*, *Frankenweenie*) in Manchester, England, has also been working in the medium for more than two decades and has seen its popularity ebb and flow. “There is tangibility with stop motion. It feels real because it's a physical thing that is up on-screen and before your eyes. It has that direct organic-type feel.”

Richard Randolph, head of production and creative director at Komixx Entertainment (also in Manchester), has worked with stop motion since the early 1990s. He posits that the style's enduring nature, and its current popularity, could even be the result of socio-economic factors. “Maybe there is a little bit of a return to family values,” he ventures. “Times are tough, so maybe there has been a bit of resurgence because of that.”

Perhaps these are some of the reasons behind Nickelodeon's decision to produce the upcoming holiday special *It's a SpongeBob Christmas* in stop motion. It marks the first time an episode of the iconic series is being given the full stop-motion treatment.

“Our feeling is we have a Christmas special and we want to do something to make it become a classic *SpongeBob* piece,” says Claudia Spinelli, production manager of *SpongeBob SquarePants*. “Stop motion is something you automatically think of when you think ‘Christmas special.’”

Slated to run on the US network between Thanksgiving and Christmas this year, *It's a SpongeBob Christmas* has been in the making for about 18 months and will translate the iconic 2D environment of Bikini Bottom into a fully realized, tactile three-dimensional landscape.

Naturally toyetic?

It's never the first consideration, but a happy accident of employing stop motion is that it tends to work very well with ancillary/consumer products ambitions. It makes sense, after all, that three-dimensional characters crafted from real-world materials would translate easily into real-world products.

"There is no doubt about it," says UK animation house Komixx Entertainment's joint CEO Andrew Cole-Bulgin. "There is just a natural affinity, and the toy companies like that the same thing you see on the screen, you can buy at a store."

While Komixx has not inked a master toy deal for its latest stop-motion production *Toby's Travelling Circus* yet, Cole-Bulgin says there has been no shortage of offers, and announcements are expected soon.

Similarly, DHX Media SVP of distribution, Josh Scherba, who has worked with stop-motion characters like Lunar Jim and Poco in the past, agrees that there is a clear connection. "We have been happy with the quality of product that has come out of those series," he says. And in the UK, Character Options has signed on as the master toy partner for Three Stone Media/DHX preschool series *Rastamouse*. The plush category has been particularly hot with a nine-inch soft toy standing out among their offerings.

Additionally, Scherba says that a costume character license (key for promotional appearances) made with UK licensee Rainbow has also benefited from the nature and design of *Rastamouse*'s stop-motion characters.

"You have to design a real puppet with real dimensions," he says. "And you can translate those dimensions directly into products. It makes the whole package more effective."



Rastamouse's stop-motion style has helped to attract licensees



It's a *SpongeBob Christmas*, marks the entrée of the iconic 2D character into the realm of stop-motion animation

Standing out in a crowd UK terrestrial Channel Five recently commissioned a second season of Komixx Entertainment's preschool show *Toby's Travelling Circus* for its top-rating Milkshake weekday block. When the producer initially set out to make the 52 x 10-minute series, the option to animate it in a more economical style, like 2D or CGI, was tempting.

"We could have gone the CGI route," says Andrew Cole-Bulgin, joint CEO for the company. "We had a number of companies approaching us with the idea of doing a CGI stop-frame lookalike."

The ability to shave between US\$2 and US\$3 million off a US\$7 million production budget was definitely a selling point for CGI, but ultimately the decision to stick with the original animation plan has paid off with good ratings, a unique finished product and a second-season greenlight.

"Kids are a brilliant audience," Cole-Bulgin explains. "They are unforgiving, and if you put rubbish in front of them they will turn off the TV right away."

The series tells the tale of Toby, a seven-year-old boy who runs his own

circus. Complete with a visually arresting cast of carousels, rocket rides, acrobats and clowns, Komixx believes the series' success is due, at least partially, to the fact that it stands out visually from other preschool content.

"We had to be slightly crazy to do it in stop motion," says Randolph. "It was quite a challenge, but when I saw it with the actual puppets, it looked fantastic. The way the movement translates is stunning."

The goal of rising above the clutter in a preschool space awash in CGI was likewise the impetus for Three Stones Media to produce CBeebies series *Rastamouse* (now in its third season) using the time-honored stop-motion style.

"The preschool space is pretty crowded," says Josh Scherba, SVP of distribution at DHX Media, the series' distributor. "Coming up with a unique look and style is increasingly important."

The tangible feel and emotional payoff that many associate with the animation style is not only the result of using real materials on screen, but many producers say it is also because stop motion is by nature a very collaborative and inclusive process—something that can't necessarily be said of other animation styles.

"When we launch a shot, every department has to be on set," says Mary Sandell, head of production for Laika. "The set dressers, the animators, the riggers, the DP and the director all have to come together in an amazing way to get the shot. There is nothing more satisfying than seeing all these disciplines come together."

It's that team effort required to produce a unified work that knits the crews tightly together, adds Bowden. "When



Toby's Travelling Circus producer Komixx contends that stop-motion has helped the series get solid ratings on UK net Channel Five's Milkshake block

you work in stop motion, you are with the whole team," he says. "There is a real sense of unity."

New tricks Although it's a traditional form of animation, stop motion's technical evolution continues. One of its key innovations has been the introduction of 3D printing technology, also known as rapid prototyping, to improve the animation of character faces.

"We started using 3D printing technology for *Coraline*," says Sandell. "Before we used to use tiny gears and joints in the faces, but we found that we could achieve the same thing through 3D printing."

She adds that the use of 3D printing technology allows animators to "create unique facial expressions" that could then be placed onto models and integrated into scenes. "We could potentially get an endless range of emotional nuance and create a more naturalistic performance."

The innovation for the company's latest production, *ParaNorman*, gave animators the ability to print the faces in color, opening up even more avenues for facial expressions. "In *Coraline*, we had five little dots as her freckles. But not having to hand-paint the faces opened up more possibilities for *ParaNorman*."

Mackinnon & Saunders' Bowden also sees the advent of 3D printing as a major innovation in the century-old art-form. "It's a very exciting development," he says. "It's really the ultimate in visual trickery."

Additionally, the integration of CGI effects into stop-motion feature films has added elements of awe to the productions.

"The improvement in computer and software tools has allowed us to add a cinematic scope and complexity," says Sandell. "We have pushed it further with *ParaNorman* with CG weather and digital set extensions, and I expect our next production will have even more."

Cost comparisons The issue of cost involved in making stop-motion productions is a bit sticky. As Bowden affirms, it's difficult to compare the costs associated with one type of animation to another.

"CG films can cost US\$100 million to make, but certain ones may cost only US\$50 million," he says. "Generally you can say that CGI films cost less to produce than stop motion, but you can spend a lot of money for both. Overall, stop motion is going to take longer, so that will cost more."

Ragdoll's Wood says that the time it takes to produce high-quality stop motion is what keeps *Abney & Teal's* budget higher than a similar CGI or live-action production. "With some stop motion you are very lucky to get 30 seconds a day on average," she says. "On live action you can get five minutes. That's why stop motion's more expensive."

In a TV series like *Toby's Travelling Circus*, its six animators can each produce about 10 seconds per day, or roughly two scenes that are four to five seconds in length, according to Randolph.

Bowden says that while recent advancements in stop-motion tech might improve the look of the end-result, they have so far done nothing to accelerate the pace of filming.

With features, for example, their lead time is a function of the complexity of the production. For *Coraline*, the schedule called for 14 months of pre-production, an 18-month shooting schedule and an additional four to six months in post production. The process took place in a 150,000-square-foot studio that employed more than 300 artists. The film cost an estimated US\$70 million to produce and grossed roughly US\$150 million in worldwide box office. In comparison—and standing as an example of CGI costing much more than stop-motion animation—Disney/Pixar's *Toy Story 3* had an estimated US\$200-million production budget.

Laika's Sutner says that while some expect technological advances in stop motion to equal savings, they never quite materialize the way that a budget-minded producer might like. "Nothing makes it cheaper or easier," she says. "We thought that shooting on digital cameras would have made it easier, but it just creates other challenges. All the tricks that we now have may not make it cheaper, but they create better tools and better results that help us tell a more nuanced story." **K**



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